

1947

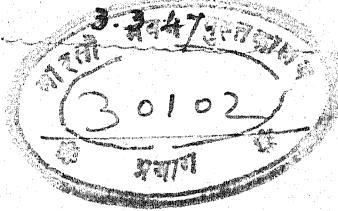
At the very moment when everything seems to go from bad to worse, it is then that we must make a supreme act of faith and know that the Grace will never fail us.

The hours before the dawn are always the darkest.  
The servitude just before freedom comes is the most painful of all.

But in the heart endowed with faith burns the eternal flame of hope which leaves no room for discouragement.

The Mother

Sisir Kumar Basu.



# The ADVENT

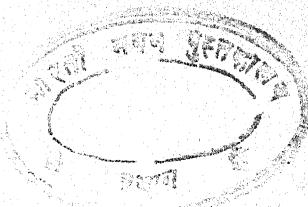
February, 1947

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
A PRAYER—The Mother	<i>Inset</i>
EDITORIAL—Nolini Kanta Gupta	
(i) The World is One	... 1
(ii) "Perennial Philosophy"	... 2
(iii) The Freedom and the Force of the Spirit	... 4
(iv) "Savitri"	... 6
SAVITRI, BOOK III, CANTO II—Sri Aurobindo	... 7
THE SUPREME WILL—Sri Aurobindo	... 12
SPIRITUALITY AND THE MODERN WORLD—N. Pearson	... 19
THE MESSAGE OF SRI AUROBINDO—Pavitra	... 24
DOUBTS AND THE LIFE DIVINE—K. D. Sethna	... 36
THE FUTURE POETRY—Sisir Kumar Ghosh	... 41
THE TEACHING OF THE GITA—Anilbaran Roy	... 47
REVIEWS	... 50

A bodiless murmur travelled at his side  
In the wounded gloom complaining against light.  
A huge obstruction its immobile heart,  
The watching opacity multiplied as he moved  
Its hostile mass of dead and staring eyes;  
The darkness glimmered like a dying torch.  
Around him an extinguished phantom glare  
Peopled with shadowy and misleading shapes  
The vague Inconscient's dark and measureless cave.  
His only sunlight was his spirit's flame.

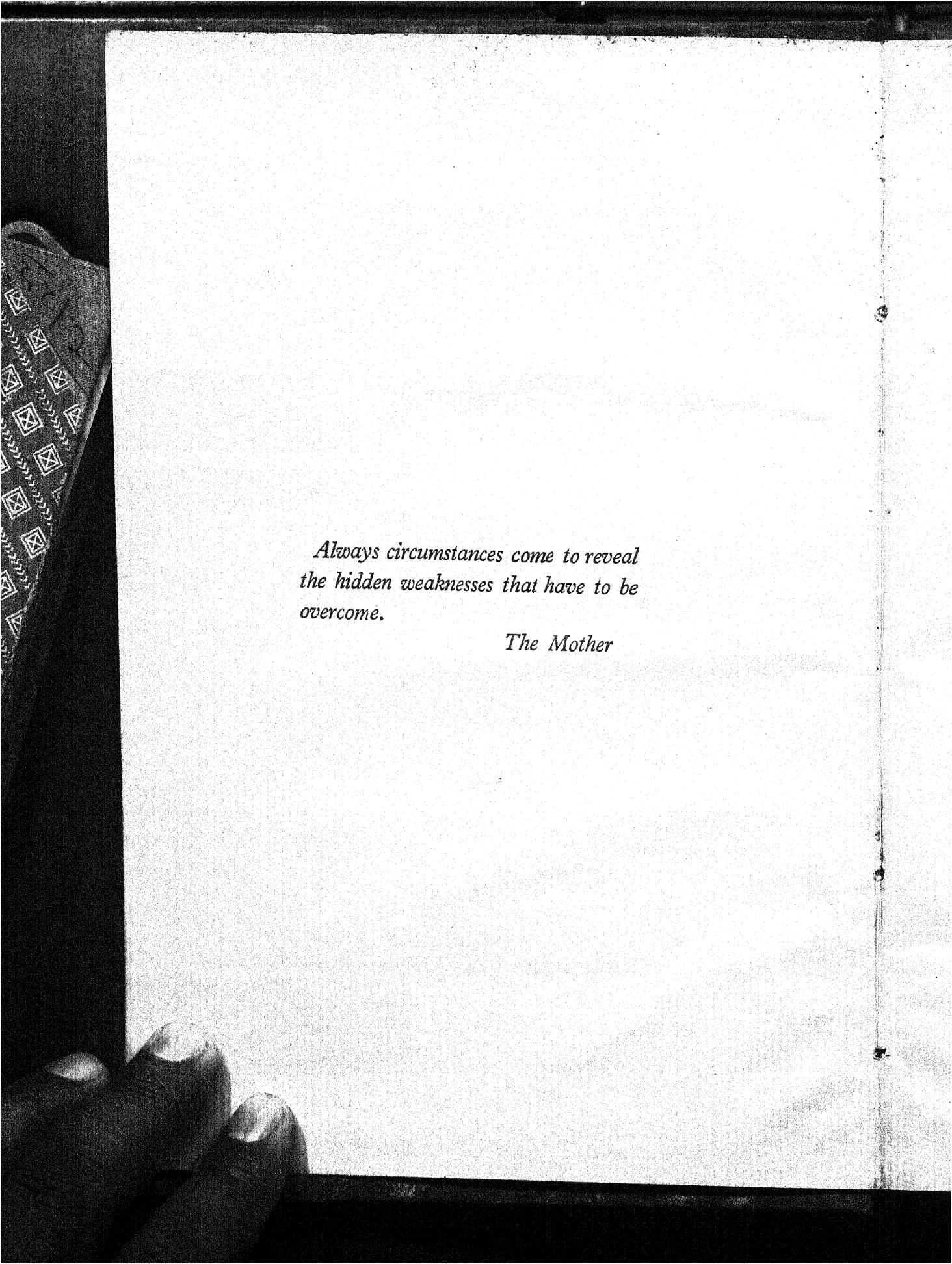
Sri Aurobindo—*Savitri, Book II, Canto 5.*



aan.  
19, 1847.



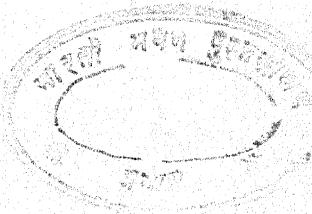
# The Advent



*Always circumstances come to reveal  
the hidden weaknesses that have to be  
overcome.*

*The Mother*

Sib Kumar Basu.  
First May, '47.



# The ADVENT

April, 1947

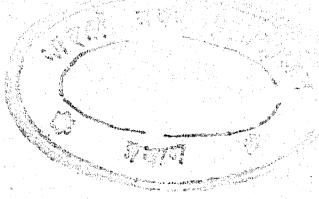
## CONTENTS

	PAGE
A PRAYER—The Mother	<i>Inset</i>
EDITORIAL: Nolini Kanta Gupta	
(i) Communism—What does it mean? ...	59
(ii) To be or not to be ...	61
(iii) "Savitri" ...	64
SAVITRI, Book III, CANTO III—Sri Aurobindo	66
EQUALITY AND THE ANNIHILATION OF EGO— Sri Aurobindo ...	80
THE FUTURE POETRY—Sisir Kumar Ghosh	88
READINGS FROM THE UPANISHADS (Conclusion)— T. V. Kapali Sastry ...	97
YOGA AND LIFE—C. C. Dutt ...	105
SPIRITUALITY AND THE MODERN WORLD— N. Pearson ...	III
REVIEW—	119

*It is the lesson of life that always in the world everything fails a man—only the Divine does not fail him, if he turns entirely to the Divine. It is not because there is something bad in you that blows fall on you—blows fall on all human beings because they are full of desire for things that cannot last and they lose them or, even if they get, it brings disappointment and cannot satisfy them. To turn to the Divine is the only truth in life.*

21-4-1933

Sri Aurobindo



# *The Advent*

It matters not if there are hundreds of beings plunged in the densest ignorance. He whom we saw yesterday is on earth: His presence is enough to prove that a day will come when darkness will be transformed into light, when Thy reign shall be established in effect upon earth.

MARCH 30, 1914

THE MOTHER

*SK Basu*  
22.8.47.



# The ADVENT

August 1947

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
ON THE PRESENT SITUATION — <i>The Mother</i>	<i>Inset</i>
EDITORIAL: — <i>Nolini Kanta Gupta</i>	
(i) Evolution of Spiritual Consciousness	.. 125
(ii) At the Origin of Ignorance	.. 128
(iii) The Soul of a Nation	.. 129
(iv) The Body Natural	.. 131
SAVITRI, BOOK III, CANTO IV — <i>Sri Aurobindo</i>	.. 133
THE THREE MODES OF NATURE — <i>Sri Aurobindo</i>	.. 146
THE PSYCHIC BEING — <i>C. C. Dutt</i>	.. 155
THE FUTURE POETRY — <i>Sisir Kumar Ghosh</i> ..	160
IS SRI AUROBINDO NEW? — <i>K. D. Sethna</i>	.. 168
SPIRITUALITY AND THE MODERN WORLD (IV)	— <i>N. Pearson</i> .. 175
REVIEW — <i>A. B.</i>	.. 181

“ Oh, surely one day he shall come to our cry,  
One day he shall create our life anew  
And utter the magic formula of peace  
And bring perfection to the scheme of things.  
One day he shall descend to life and earth,  
Leaving the secrecy of the eternal doors  
Into a world that cries to him for help  
And bring the truth that sets the spirit free,  
The joy that is the baptism of the soul,  
The strength that is the outstretched arm of Love.  
One day he shall lift his beauty's dreadful veil,  
Impose delight on the world's beating heart  
And bare his secret body of light and bliss.”

Savitri, Part I, Book II, Canto 6

SRI AUROBINDO



# *The Advent*

*There is only one way of being right, but there  
are many ways of being wrong.*

*The Mother*

*SK Basu*  
30.11.47.



# The ADVENT

November 1947

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
EDITORIALS :	
(i) Physician, heal Thyself	.. 189
(ii) The Measure of Time	.. 191
(iii) Man the Prototype	.. 192
(iv) The Role of Evil	.. 194
SAVITRI, BOOK I CANTO IV	— Sri Aurobindo .. 196
THE MASTER OF THE WORK	— Sri Aurobindo .. 216
THE FUTURE POETRY	— Sisir Kumar Ghosh .. 225
FREEWILL IN SRI AUROBINDO'S VISION —	K. D. Sethna .. 231
SRI AUROBINDO	— Kishor H. Gandhi .. 237
REVIEWS	
(i) War, Sadism and Peace	— A. B. .. 241
(ii) India, a Synthesis of Cultures —India Today	} — C. C. Dutt .. 244

*Live always as if you were under the very  
eye of the Supreme and of the Divine Mother.  
Do nothing, try to think and feel nothing that  
would be unworthy of the Divine Presence.*

*Sri Aurobindo*

Vol. IV. No. 1

February 1947



The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. - - - - Sri Aurobindo.

### *The World is One*

WE say not only that India is one and indivisible (and for that matter Bengal too is one and indivisible, since we have to repeat axiomatic truths that have fallen on evil days and on evil tongues), but that also the whole world is one and indivisible. They who seek to drive in a wedge anywhere, who are busy laying some kind of *cordon sanitaire* across countries and nations or cultures and civilisations, in the holy name of a bigoted ideology, are, to say the least, doing a disservice to humanity, indeed they are inviting a disaster and catastrophe to the world and equally to themselves. For that is an attempt to stem the high tide of Nature's swell towards a global unity that shall brook no resistance.

The distinctions and differences that held good in other times and climes can have no sense or value in the world of today. Race or religion can divide man no longer; even nationhood has lost much of its original force and meaning. It is strange—perhaps it is inevitable in the secret process of Nature's working—that when everything in conditions and circumstances obviously demands and points to an obliteration of all frontiers of division and separation—economically and politically too—and all drive towards a closer co-operation and intermingling, it is precisely then that the contrary spirit and impulse raises its head and seems even to gather added strength and violence. The fact may have two explanations. First of all, it may mean a defence gesture in Nature, that is to say, certain forces or formations have a permanent place in Nature's economy and when they apprehend that they are being ousted and neglected, when there is a one-pointed drive for their exclusion, naturally they surge up and demand recognition with a vengeance: for things forgotten or left aside that form indissolubly part of Nature's fabric and pattern, one has to retrace one's steps in order to pick them up again. But also the phenomenon may mean a simple case of atavism: for we must know that there are certain old-world aboriginal habits and movements that have to go and have no place in the higher scheme of Nature and these too come up off and on, especially when the demand is there for their final liquidation. They have to be recognised as such and treated as such. Racial and religious (including ideological) egoisms seem to us to belong to the category.)

In the higher scheme of Nature, the next evolutionary status that is being forged, it is unity, harmony that is insisted upon, for that is the very basis of the new creation: whatever militates against that, whatever creates division and disruption must be banned and ruthlessly eschewed. In the reality of things, in the actual life that man lives, it will be found that on the whole things that separate are less numerous and insistent than those that unite man and man or nation and nation, if each one simply lives and lets live: on the contrary, it is the points of concordance and mutuality that abound. A certain knot or twist in the mind makes all the difference: it brings in the ignorance, selfishness, blind passion—a possession by the dark forces of atavism that makes the mischief.

We ask for freedom, liberty of the individual, self-determination—well and good. But that does not mean the license to do as one pleases, impelled by one's irrational idiosyncrasies. The individual must be truly individual, not a fractional being, the self must be the real self, not a shadow or surface formulation in order to have the full right to unfettered movement. Liberty, yes; but that means liberty for all, which means again the other two terms of the great trinity, equality and fraternity. Individuality, yes; that means every individuality, in other words, solidarity. The two sides of the equation must be given equal value and equal emphasis. If the stress upon one leads to Nazism, Fascism or Stalinism, steam-rollered uniformity or stream-lined regimentation, the death of the individual, the other emphasis leads to disintegration and disruption, to the same end only in a different way. But in the world of today, after the victory in the last war over the Nazi conception of humanity, it seems as though the spirit of disruption has gone abroad, human consciousness has been atom-bombed into flying fragments; so we have the spectacle of all manner of parochialism pullulating on the earth, regional and ideological—Imperial Blocks, nations, groups, parties have chequered *ad infinitum*, have balkanised human commonality.

We badly needed a United Nations' Organisation, but we are facing the utmost possible disunity. The lesson is that politics alone will not save us, nor even economics. The word has gone forth: what is required is a *change of heart*. The leaders of humanity must have a new heart grafted in place of the old. That is the surgical operation imperative at the moment. That heart will declare in its beats that the cosmos is not atomic but one and indivisible, *ekam sat, neha nānāsti kiñcana*.

### *"Perennial Philosophy"*

This latest work of Aldous Huxley is a collection of sayings of sages and saints and philosophers from all over the world and of all times. The sayings are arranged under several heads such as "That art Thou", "The Nature of the Ground", "Divine Incarnation", "Self-Knowledge", "Silence", "Faith" etc., which clearly give an idea of the contents and also of the "Neo-Brahmin's" own personal preoccupation. There is also a running commentary, rather a note on each saying, meant to elucidate and explain, naturally from the compiler's standpoint, what is obviously addressed to the initiate.

A similar compilation was published in the Arya, called "Eternal Wisdom" (*Les Paroles éternelles*, in French) a portion of which appeared later on in book-form: that was more elaborate, the contents were arranged in such a way that no comments were needed, they were self-explanatory divided as they were in chapters and sections and subsections with proper headings, the whole thing put in a

logical and organised sequence. Huxley's compilation begins under the title of the Upanishadic text "That art thou" with this saying of Eckhart: "The more God is in all things, the more He is outside them. The more He is within, the more without". It will be interesting to note that the Arya compilation too starts with the same idea under the title "The God of All; the God who is in All", the first quotation being from Philolaus, "The Universe is a Unity". The "Eternal Wisdom" has an introduction called "The Song of Wisdom" which begins with this saying from the Book of Wisdom: "We fight to win sublime Wisdom; therefore men call us warriors".

Huxley gives only one quotation from Sri Aurobindo under the heading "God in the World". Here it is:

"The touch of Earth is always reinvigorating to the son of Earth, even when he seeks a supraphysical Knowledge. It may even be said that the supraphysical can only be really mastered in its fullness—to its heights we can always reach—when we keep our feet firmly on the physical. 'Earth is His footing' says the Upanishad, whenever it images the Self that manifests in the universe."

Huxley's commentary is as follows:

"To its heights we can always come.' For those of us who are still splashing about in the lower ooze, the phrase has a rather ironical ring. Nevertheless, in the light of even the most distant acquaintance with the heights and the fullness, it is possible to understand what its author means. To discover the Kingdom of God exclusively within oneself is easier than to discover it, not only there, but also in the outer worlds of minds and things and living creatures. It is easier because the heights within reveal themselves to those who are ready to exclude from their purview all that lies without. And though this exclusion may be a painful and mortificatory process, the fact remains that it is less arduous than the process of inclusion, by which we come to know the fullness as well as the heights of spiritual life. Where there is exclusive concentration on the heights within, temptations and distractions are avoided and there is a general denial and suppression. But when the hope is to know God inclusively—to realise the divine Ground in the world as well as in the soul, temptations and distractions must not be avoided, but submitted to and used as opportunities for advance; there must be no suppression of outward-turning activities, but a transformation of them so that they become sacramental."

The neatness of the commentary cannot be improved upon. Only with regard to the "ironical ring" of which Huxley speaks, it has just to be pointed out, as he himself seems to understand, that the "we" referred to in the phrase does not mean humanity in general that 'splashes about in the lower ooze' but those who have a sufficiently developed inner spiritual life.

There is a quotation from Lao Tzu put under the heading "Grace and Free Will": "It was when the Great Way declined that human kindness and morality arose".

We fear Mr. Huxley has completely missed the point of the cryptic sentence. He seems to take it as meaning that human kindness and morality are a means to the recovery of the Lost Way—although codes of ethics and deliberate choices are not sufficient in themselves, they are only a second best, yet they mark the rise of self-consciousness and have to be utilised to pass on into the unitive knowledge that is Tao. This explanation or amplification seems to us somewhat confused and irrelevant to the idea expressed in the apophthegm. What is stated here is much simpler and transparent. It is this that when the Divine is absent

and the divine knowledge, then comes in man with his human mental knowledge: it is man's humanity that clouds the Divine and to reach the Divine one must reject the human values, all the moralities, *sarva dharma*, seek only the Divine. The lesser way lies through the dualities, good and evil, the Great Way is beyond them and cannot be limited or measured by the relative standards. Especially in the modern age we see the decline and almost the disappearance of the Greater Light and instead a thousand smaller lights are lighted which vainly strive to dispel the gathering darkness. These do not help, they are false lights and men are apt to cling to them shutting their eyes to the true one which is not that that one worships here and now, *nedam yadidam upasate*.

There is a beautiful quotation from the Chinese sage Wu Ch'êng-ên regarding the doubtful utility of written Scriptures:

'Listen to this!' shouted Monkey. 'After all the trouble we had getting here from China, and after you specially ordered that we were to be given the scriptures, Ananda and Kasyapa made a fraudulent delivery of goods. They gave us blank copies to take away; I ask you, what is the good of that to us? You needn't shout,' said the Buddha smiling. 'As a matter of fact, it is such blank scrolls as these that are the true scriptures. But I quite see that the people of China are too foolish and ignorant to believe this, so there is nothing for it but to give them copies with some writing on.'

A sage can smile and smile delightfully! The parable illustrates the well-known Biblical phrase, 'the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life'. The monkey is symbolical of the ignorant, arrogant, fussy human mind. There is another Buddhistic story about the monkey quoted in the book and it is as delightful; but being somewhat long we cannot reproduce it here. It tells how the mind-monkey is terribly agile, quick, clever, competent, moving lightning fast, imagining that it can easily go to the end of the world, to Paradise itself, to Brahmic status. But alas! when he thought he was speeding straight like a rocket or an arrow and arrived right at the target, he found that he was spinning like a top at the same spot, and what he very likely took to be the very fragrance of the topmost supreme heaven was nothing but the aroma of his own urine.

### *The Freedom and the Force of the Spirit*

The first thing that has to be learnt in life is that circumstances are not all in all: however powerful and overwhelming they may appear to be at a given moment, man can always react against them. If there is not an immediate success externally as desired, the will thus exerted does not go in vain. First of all, it declares and asserts the independence and autonomy of the inner man: something within is found and established which is not touched by the environment, which lives by its own authentic truth and reality and is ever contented and happy. It is in reference to such a poise of consciousness that the great poet says:

A mind not to be changed by place or time.  
The mind is its own place, and in itself  
Can make a Heaven of Hell.....

The soldier of an ideal, the martyr bear testimony to the reality of this mental condition: the Yogi is he who is supremely indifferent to outside contacts (*mâtrâ-*

*sparsāḥ*), fixed as he is in inner union with the Divine. Secondly, the freedom of the will not only liberates the inner person, but exerts a pressure on the outside also, upon the field and circumstances, obliging them to change or move in the direction and according to the demand of the will. Consciousness has this power: only all depends on the nature of the consciousness and the will it embodies. For consciousness-will has varying degrees and levels of its potential. A will belonging to the purely mental consciousness can have only a very limited result and may not even show itself at all in any external modification. For it is only one among a million contending forces and its effect will depend upon the allies it can count on its side. Similar is the case with a vital will or a physico-vital will: these are more effective apparently but always in a narrow field, the narrower the field the greater the possibility of the effectiveness. Moreover a mental will affects chiefly the mental field, a vital will is directly operative in the vital world, even as a physical force is effective on physical things: each is largely confined to its own domain, the effect on other domains is for the most part indirect and remote.

But the truly effective will, the will that can produce an all-round change, comes from a still higher or deeper source. Indeed the will that never fails, that turns even the external circumstances, adverse and obstructive though they appear to be, to serve it is the will of the soul, the spiritual being in us. And man is man, not a mere animal, because he has been called upon to seek and find his soul, to get at his inner and inmost being and from there command his external nature and outside circumstances too. The orthodox name for this endeavour is spiritual discipline or Yoga.

On lower levels, a conscious will made up of a compound energy of the mental and vital and physical will, when in sufficient proportions, has considerable effective force: great men of action have this distinction. Even then however theirs is not that type which is absolute or never-failing nor that especial category which will bring about a collective change, a fundamental change, intensive as well as extensive, needed at this evolutionary crisis of earth and humanity.

The ordinary average man is part and parcel of Nature's movement and his life is almost wholly moulded by circumstances: he has not developed an independent inner being that can react against the universal Nature's current, that is to say, the Nature as it is, as it is actually and dynamically expressed. He is the creature, described graphically in the Gita, as being moved helplessly on the circling wheel of Ignorance. But even among the average men there are many who are called men of will, they are not entirely submerged in Nature's current, but endeavour to have their own way even against that current. Their psycho-vital consciousness, aided often by their physical, has an independent formation, being a strong centre of self-driven force, and can impress upon the outer Nature and circumstances its own pattern and disposition. Naturally all depends upon the degree and character of that consciousness.

But the true secret of the power to control and guide Nature's dispensation lies along a different line, not along the line of the normal activity of the mental and vital and physical consciousness. Body and life and mind belong after all, at least are closely affiliated to one's environmental consciousness; they are indeed part of the circumstances in which one is born and lives and moves. It is when one by-passes them or passes through them beyond into one's soul, into one's true being and divine personality that one at last crosses mortality and attains immortality—*mṛtyum tirtwā amṛtam aśnute*.

*"Savitri"* \*

Savitri, the Divine Grace in human form, is upon earth. The Divine Consciousness has abandoned its own supreme transcendental status to enter into the human consciousness and partake of the earthly life: it has taken up a mortal frame, to live and dwell here below. Only thus can she transform the lower animal nature into the divine nature, raise man to godhead, make of earth heaven itself.

A prodigal of her rich divinity,  
Her self and all she was she had lent to men,  
Hoping her greater being to implant  
That heaven might native grow in mortal soil.

But the task is not easy. The flesh is weak: it is incapable of holding or receiving the breath of immortality. Not only so, it has a positive aversion, a bad will: it is refractory, antipathetic to the touch of the spirit. Matter is dull and dumb, dark and obdurate: mortality loves and clings jealously and exclusively to its mortal home. The earthly being does not know, cannot appreciate the gift, the boon that is brought to him, to his very door: he has only to receive and accept in order to be saved out of all ignorance and grief, impotence and death. The Divine Mother has forgotten herself, has made herself as small and as close and native to earth as any earthly creature, like any one of us, taken upon herself all the limitations and indignities, the entire burden of an earthly life, graced with her presence this mortal atmosphere. But

Hard is it to persuade earth-nature's change;  
Mortality bears ill the eternal's touch:  
It fears the pure divine intolerance  
Of its assault of ether and of fire;  
It murmurs at its sorrowless happiness,  
Almost with hate repels the light it brings.....

As, however, "mortality bears ill the eternal's touch", the eternal too is intolerant of the mortal nature—only it is intolerant not in the ignorant, blind, squeamish, weak human way, but in a divine way, for it is armed with weapons of light and knowledge, it assaults with its luminous force, the energy of ether and fire, the higher and nobler elements as against the dense dark dumb earth, the lowest element that clothes the human consciousness. Indeed, mortality is enamoured of the tangled beam of joy and sorrow, of laughter and tears, of light and shadow and cannot contemplate the unalloyed sheer delight in Eternity. It is out of breath in the serene rarefied air of immortality; it pines for the *terra ferma*, the mud and slime. The human consciousness has been fleeing the Hound of Heaven down the corridors of Time, and yet it will be caught in the end and wholly transmuted in the divine embrace into the substance of the Divine Himself. All the unwillingness and protestation and revolt are meant to forge and hammer the final union into something perfect, faultless, absolute.

---

\* *Savitri, A Legend and a Symbol. Book I. Canto I. By Sri Aurobindo.*

# SAVITRI

## BOOK THREE

### CANTO II

#### THE ADORATION OF THE DIVINE MOTHER

A STILLNESS absolute, incommunicable,  
Marks the sheer self-discovery of the soul;  
A wall of stillness shuts it from the world,  
A gulf of stillness swallows up the sense  
And makes unreal all that mind has known.  
Only the Inconceivable is left,  
Only the Nameless without space and time:  
Self's vast spiritual silence occupies space;  
Thought falls from us and we cease from joy and grief;  
The ego is dead; we are free from being and Time,  
We have done with birth and death and work and fate.  
O soul, it is too early to rejoice!  
Thou hast reached the boundless silence of the Self,  
Thou hast leaped into a glad divine abyss;  
But where hast thou thrown self's mission and self's power?  
On what dead bank on the Eternal's road?  
One was within thee who was all the world,  
What hast thou done for his purpose in the stars?  
Escape is not the victory and the crown!  
Something thou cam'st to do from the Unknown,  
But nothing is finished and the world goes on,  
Because only half God's cosmic work is done.  
Only the everlasting No has neared  
And stared into thy eyes and killed thy heart:  
But where is the Lover's everlasting Yes,  
And immortality in the secret heart,  
The voice that chants to the creator Fire,  
The symbolized OM, the great assenting Word,  
The bridge between the rapture and the calm,  
The passion and the beauty of the Bride,  
The chamber where the glorious enemies kiss,  
The smile that saves, the golden peak of things?  
This too is Truth at the mystic fount of Life.  
A black veil has been lifted; we have seen  
The mighty shadow of the omniscient Lord;  
But who has lifted up the veil of light

And who has seen the body of the King?  
 A mystery of God's birth and acts remains,  
 Unsolved is the riddle of the unfinished Play;  
 The cosmic Player laughs within his mask,  
 And still the last inviolable secret hides  
 Behind the human glory of a Form,  
 Behind the gold eidolon of a Name.  
 A large white line has figured as a goal,  
 But far beyond the ineffable suntracks blaze.  
 What seemed the source and end was a wide gate,  
 A last bare step into eternity.  
 An eye has opened upon timelessness,  
 Infinity takes back the forms it gave,  
 And through God's darkness or his naked light  
 His million rays return into the Sun.  
 There is a zero sign of the Supreme;  
 Nature left nude and still uncovers God.  
 But in her grandiose nothingness all is there:  
 When her strong garbs are torn away from us,  
 The soul's ignorance is slain but not the soul.  
 The zero covers an immortal face.  
 A high and black negation is not all,  
 A huge extinction is not God's last word,  
 Life's ultimate sense, the close of being's course,  
 The meaning of this great mysterious world.  
 In absolute silence sleeps an absolute Power.  
 Awaking, it can wake the trance-bound soul  
 And in the ray reveal the parent sun:  
 It can make the world a vessel of Spirit's force,  
 It can fashion in the clay God's perfect shape.  
 To free the self is but a radiant pace;  
 Here to fulfil himself was God's desire.

Even while he stood on being's naked edge  
 And all the passion and seeking of his soul  
 Faced their extinction in some featureless Vast,  
 The Presence he yearned for suddenly drew close.  
 Across the silence of the ultimate Calm,  
 Out of a marvellous Transcendence' core,  
 A body of wonder and translucency  
 Wearing, as if the sweet summary of her soul,  
 Someone came infinite and absolute.  
 A being of wisdom, power and delight,  
 Even as a mother draws her child to her arms,  
 Took to her breast Nature and world and soul.  
 Abolishing the signless emptiness,  
 Breaking the vacancy and voiceless hush,  
 Piercing the limitless Unknowable,  
 Into the liberty of the motionless depths  
 A beautiful and felicitous lustre stole,

Imaged itself in a surprising beam  
And built a golden passage to his heart  
Touching through him all longing sentient things.  
A moment's sweetness of the All-Beautiful  
Cancelled the vanity of the cosmic whirl.  
A Nature throbbing with a Heart divine  
Was felt in the unconscious universe;  
It made the breath a happy mystery  
And brought a love sustaining pain with joy;  
Affirming in life a secret ecstasy  
It held the spirit to its miraculous course;  
Carrying immortal values to the hours  
It justified the labour of the suns.  
For one was there supreme behind the God.  
A Mother Might brooded upon the world;  
A Consciousness revealed its marvellous front  
Transcending all that is, denying none:  
Imperishable above our fallen heads  
He felt a rapturous and unstumbling Force.  
The undying Truth appeared, the enduring Power  
Of all that here is made and then destroyed,  
The Mother of all godheads and all strengths  
Who, mediatrix, binds earth to the Supreme.  
The Enigma ceased that rules our nature's night,  
The covering Nescience was unmasked and slain;  
Its mind of error was stripped off from things  
And the dull moods of its perverting will.  
Illumined by her all-seeing identity  
Knowledge and Ignorance could strive no more;  
No longer could the titan Opposites,  
Antagonist poles of the world's artifice,  
Impose the illusion of their twofold screen  
Throwing their figures between us and her.  
The Wisdom was near, disguised by its own works,  
Of which the darkened universe is the robe.  
No more existence seemed an aimless fall,  
Extinction was no more the sole release.  
The hidden Word was found, the long-sought clue,  
Revealed was the meaning of our spirit's birth,  
Condemned to an imperfect body and mind,  
In the inconscience of material things  
And the indignity of mortal life.  
A Heart was felt in the spaces wide and bare,  
A burning Love from white spiritual founts  
Annulled the sorrow of the ignorant depths;  
Suffering was lost in her immortal smile.  
A Life from beyond grew conqueror here of Death;  
To err no more was natural to mind;  
Wrong could not come where all was light and love.  
The Formless and the Formed were joined in her.

## THE ADVENT

Immensity was exceeded by a look,  
 A Face revealed the crowded Infinite.  
 Incarnating inexpressibly in her limbs  
 The boundless joy the blind world-forces seek,  
 Her body of beauty mooned the seas of bliss.  
 At the head she stands of birth and toil and fate,  
 In their slow round the cycles turn to her call;  
 Alone her hands can change Time's dragon base.  
 Hers is the mystery the Night conceals;  
 The spirit's alchemist energy is hers;  
 She is the golden bridge, the wonderful fire.  
 The luminous heart of the Unknown is she,  
 A power of silence in the depths of God;  
 She is the Force, the inevitable Word,  
 The magnet of our difficult ascent,  
 The Sun from which we kindle all our suns,  
 The Light that leans from the unrealised Vasts,  
 The joy that beckons from the impossible,  
 The Might of all that never yet came down.  
 All Nature dumbly calls to her alone  
 To heal with her feet the aching throb of life  
 And break the seals on the dim soul of man  
 And kindle her fire in the closed heart of things.  
 All here shall be one day her sweetness's home,  
 All contraries prepare her harmony;  
 Towards her our knowledge climbs, our passion gropes,  
 In her miraculous rapture we shall dwell,  
 Her clasp will turn to ecstasy our pain.  
 Our self shall be one self with all through her.  
 In her confirmed because transformed in her,  
 Our life shall find in its fulfilled response  
 Above, the boundless hushed beatitudes,  
 Below, the wonder of the embrace divine.  
 This known as in a thunder-flash of God,  
 The rapture of things eternal filled his limbs;  
 Amazement fell upon his ravished sense;  
 His spirit was caught in her intolerant flame.  
 Once seen, his heart acknowledged only her.  
 Only a hunger of infinite bliss was left.  
 All aims in her were lost, then found in her;  
 His base was gathered into one pointing spire.

Thus was a seed cast into endless Time.  
 A Word is spoken or a Light is shown,  
 A moment sees, the ages toil to express.  
 So flashing out of the Timeless leaped the worlds;  
 An eternal instant is the cause of the years.  
 All he had done was to prepare a field;  
 Its small beginnings asked for a mighty end:  
 For all that he had been must now new-shape

In him her joy to embody, to enshrine  
Her beauty and greatness in his house of life.  
But now his being was too wide for self;  
His heart's demand had grown immeasurable:  
His single freedom could not satisfy,  
Her light, her bliss he asked for earth and men.  
But vain are human power and human love  
To break earth's seal of ignorance and death;  
His nature's might seemed now an infant's grasp;  
Heaven is too high for outstretched hands to seize.  
This Light comes not by struggle or by thought;  
In the mind's silence the Transcendent acts  
And the hushed heart hears the unuttered Word.  
A vast surrender was his only strength.  
A Power that lives upon the heights must act,  
Bring into life's closed room the Immortal's air  
And fill the finite with the Infinite.  
All that denies must be torn out and slain  
And crushed the many longings for whose sake  
We lose the One for whom our lives were made.  
Now other claims had hushed in him their cry:  
Only he longed to draw her presence and power  
Into his heart and mind and breathing frame;  
Only he yearned to call for ever down  
Her healing touch of love and truth and joy  
Into the darkness of the suffering world.  
His soul was freed and given to her alone.

SRI AUROBINDO

## *The Supreme Will\**

IN the light of this progressive manifestation of the Spirit, first apparently bound in the Ignorance, then free in the power and wisdom of the Infinite, we can better understand the great and crowning injunction of the Gita to the Karma-yogin, "Abandoning all dharmas, all principles and laws and rules of conduct, take refuge in Me alone." All standards and rules are temporary constructions founded upon the needs of the ego in its transition from Matter to Spirit. These makeshifts have a relative imperativeness so long as we rest satisfied in the stages of transition, content with the physical and vital life, attached to the mental movement, or even fixed in the ranges of the mental plane that are touched by the spiritual lustres. But beyond is the unwalled wideness of a supramental infinite consciousness and there all temporary structures cease. It is not possible to enter utterly into the spiritual truth of the Eternal and Infinite if we have not the faith and courage to trust ourselves into the hands of the Lord of all things and the Friend of all creatures and leave utterly behind us our mental limits and measures. At one moment we must plunge without hesitation, reserve or fear or scruple into the ocean of the free, the infinite, the Absolute. After the Law, Liberty; after the personal, after the general, after the universal standards there is something greater, the impersonal plasticity, the divine freedom, the transcendent force and the supernal impulse. After the strait path of the ascent the wide plateaus on the summit.

There are three stages of the ascent,—at the bottom the bodily life enslaved to the pressure of necessity and desire, in the middle the mental, the higher emotional and psychic rule that feels after greater interests, aspirations, experiences, ideas, and at the summits first a deeper psychic and spiritual state and then a supramental eternal consciousness in which all our aspirations and seekings discover their own intimate significance. In the bodily life first desire and need and then the practical good of the individual and the society are the governing consideration, the dominant force. In the mental life ideas and ideals rule, ideas that are half-lights wearing the garb of Truth, ideals formed by the mind as a result of a growing but still imperfect intuition and experience. Whenever the mental life prevails and the bodily diminishes its brute insistence, man the mental being feels pushed by the urge of mental Nature to mould in the sense of the idea or the ideal the life of the individual, and in the end even the vaguer more complex life of the society is forced to undergo this subtle process. In the spiritual life, or when a higher power than Mind has manifested and taken possession of the nature, these limited motive-forces recede, dwindle, tend to disappear. The spiritual or supramental Self, the Divine Being, the supreme and immanent Reality, must be alone the Lord within us and shape freely our final development according to the highest, widest, most integral expression possible of the law of our nature. In the end that nature acts in the perfect Truth and its spontaneous freedom; for it obeys only the luminous power of the Eternal. The individual has nothing farther to gain, no desire to fulfil; he has become a portion of the impersonality or the universal personality of the Eternal. No other object than the manifestation and play of the Divine Spirit in life and the maintenance and conduct of the world in its march

\* The Synthesis of Yoga. Chapter VIII. (Revised)

towards the divine goal can move him to action. Mental ideas, opinions, constructions are his no more; for his mind has fallen into silence, it is only a channel for the Light and Truth of the divine knowledge. Ideals are too narrow for the vastness of his spirit; it is the ocean of the Infinite that flows through him and moves him for ever.

\* \* \*

Whoever sincerely enters the path of works, must leave behind him the stage in which need and desire are the first law of our acts. For whatever desires still trouble his being, he must, if he accepts the high aim of Yoga, put them away from him into the hands of the Lord within us. The supreme power will deal with them for the good of the sadhaka and for the good of all. In effect, we find that once this surrender is done,—always provided the rejection is sincere,—egoistic indulgence of desire may for some time recur under the continued impulse of past nature but only in order to exhaust its acquired momentum and to teach the embodied being in his most unteachable part, his nervous, vital, emotional nature, by the reactions of desire, by its grief and unrest bitterly contrasted with calm periods of the higher peace or marvellous movements of divine Ananda, that egoistic desire is not a law for the soul that seeks liberation or aspires to its own original god-nature. Afterwards the element of desire in those impulsions will be thrown away or persistently eliminated by a constant denying and transforming pressure. Only the pure force of action in them (*pravrtti*) justified by an equal delight in all work and result that is inspired or imposed from above will be preserved in the happy harmony of a final perfection. To act, to enjoy is the normal law and right of the nervous being; but to choose by personal desire its action and enjoyment is only its ignorant will, not its right. Alone the supreme and universal Will must choose; action must change into a dynamic movement of that Will; enjoyment must be replaced by the play of a pure spiritual Ananda. All personal will is either a temporary delegation from on high or a usurpation by the ignorant Asura.

The social law, that second term of our progress, is a means to which the ego is subjected in order that it may learn discipline by subordination to a wider collective ego. This law may be quite empty of any moral content and may express only the needs or the practical good of the society as each society conceives it. Or it may express those needs and that good, but modified and coloured and supplemented by a higher moral or ideal law. It is binding on the developing but not yet perfectly developed individual in the shape of social duty, family obligation, communal or national demand, so long as it is not in conflict with his growing sense of the higher Right. But the sadhaka of the Karmayoga will abandon this also to the Lord of works. After he has made this surrender, his social impulses and judgements will, like his desires, only be used for their exhaustion or, it may be, so far as they are still necessary for a time to enable him to identify his lower mental nature with mankind in general or with any grouping of mankind in its works and hopes and aspirations. But after that brief time is over, they will be withdrawn and a divine government will alone abide. He will be identified with the Divine and with others only through the divine consciousness and not through the mental nature.

For, even after he is free, the sadhaka will be in the world and to be in the world is to remain in works. But to remain in works without desire is to act for the good of the world in general or for the kind or the race or for some new creation to

be evolved on the earth or some work imposed by the Divine Will within him. And this must be done either in the framework provided by the environment or the grouping in which he is born or placed or else in one which is chosen or created for him by a divine direction. Therefore in our perfection there must be nothing left in the mental being which conflicts with or prevents our sympathy and free self-identification with the kind, the group or whatever collective expression of the Divine he is meant to lead, help or serve. But in the end it must become a free self-identification through identity with the Divine and not a mental bond or moral tie of union or a vital association dominated by any kind of personal, social, national, communal or credal egoism. If any social law is obeyed, it will not be from physical necessity or from the sense of personal or general interest or for expediency or because of the pressure of the environment or from any sense of duty, but solely for the sake of the Lord of Works and because it is felt or known to be the divine Will that the social law or rule or relation as it stands can still be kept as a figure of the inner life and the minds of men must not be disturbed by its infringement. If on the other hand the social law or rule or relation is disregarded, that too will not be for the indulgence of desire, personal will or personal opinion, but because a greater rule is felt that expresses the law of the Spirit or because it is known that there must be in the march of the divine All-Will a movement towards the changing, exceeding or abolition of existing laws and forms for the sake of a freer larger life necessary to the world's progress.

There is still left the moral law or the ideal and these, even to many who think themselves free, appear for ever sacred and intangible. But the sadhaka, his gaze turned always to the heights, will abandon them to Him whom all ideals seek imperfectly and fragmentarily to express; all moral qualities are only a poor and rigid travesty of his spontaneous and illimitable perfection. The bondage to sin and evil passes away with the passing of nervous desire; for it belongs to the quality of vital passion, impulsion or drive of propensity in us (*rajoguna*) and is extinguished with the transformation of that mode of Nature. But neither must the aspirant remain subject to the gilded or golden chain of a conventional or a habitual or a mentally ordered or even a high or clear sattwic virtue. That will be replaced by something profounder and more essential than the minor inadequate thing that men call virtue. The original sense of the word was manhood and this is a much larger and deeper thing than the moral mind and its structures. The culmination of Karmayoga is a yet higher and deeper state that may perhaps be called "soulhood"—for the soul is greater than the man; a free soulhood spontaneously welling out in works of a supreme Truth and Love will replace human virtue. But this supreme Truth cannot be forced to inhabit the petty edifices of the practical reason or even confined in the more dignified constructions of the larger ideative reason that imposes its representations as if they were pure truth on the limited human intelligence. This supreme Love will not necessarily be consistent, much less will it be synonymous, with the partial and feeble, ignorant and emotion-ridden movements of human attraction, sympathy and pity. The petty law cannot bind the vaster movement; the mind's partial attainment cannot dictate its terms to the soul's supreme fulfilment.

At first, the higher Love and Truth will fulfil its movement in the sadhaka according to the essential law or way of his own nature. For that is the special aspect of the divine Nature, the particular power of the supreme Shakti, out of which his soul has emerged into the Play,—not limited indeed by the forms of this law or way, for the soul is infinite. But still its stuff of nature bears that stamp,

evolves fluently along those lines or turns around the spiral curves of that dominating influence. He will manifest the divine Truth-movement according to the temperament of the sage or the lion-like fighter or the lover and enjoyer or the worker and servant or in any combination of essential attributes (gunas) that may constitute the form given to his being by its own inner urge. It is this self-nature playing freely in his acts which men will see in him and not a conduct cut, chalked out, artificially regulated by any lesser rule or by any law from outside.

But there is a yet higher attainment, there is an infinity (*ānanya*) in which even this last limitation is exceeded, because the nature is utterly fulfilled and its boundaries vanish. There the soul lives without any boundaries; for it uses all forms and moulds according to the divine Will in it, but it is not restrained, it is not tied down, it is not imprisoned in any power or form that it uses. This is the summit of the path of works and this the utter liberty of the soul in its actions. In reality, it has there no actions; for all its activites are a rhythm of the Supreme and sovereignly proceed from That alone like a spontaneous music out of the Infinite.

\* \* \*

The total surrender, then, of all our actions to a supreme and universal Will, an unconditioned and standardless surrender of all works to the government of something eternal within us which will replace the ordinary working of the ego-nature, is the way and end of Karmayoga. But what is this divine supreme Will and how can it be recognised by our deluded instruments and our blind prisoned intelligence?

Ordinarily, we conceive of ourselves as a separate "I" in the universe that governs a separate body and mental and moral nature, chooses in full liberty its own self-determined actions and is independent and therefore sole master of its works and responsible. It is not easy for the ordinary mind, the mind that has not thought nor looked deeply into its own constitution and constituents, it is difficult even for minds that have thought but have no spiritual vision and experience, to imagine how there can be anything else in us truer, deeper and more powerful than this apparent "I" and its empire. But the very first step towards self-knowledge as towards the true knowledge of phenomena is to get behind the apparent truth of things and find the real but masked essential and dynamic truth which their appearances cover.

This ego or "I" is not a lasting truth, much less our essential part; it is only a formation of Nature, a mental form of thought centralisation in the perceiving and discriminating mind, a vital form of the centralisation of feeling and sensation in our parts of life, a form of physical conscious reception centralising substance and function of substance in our bodies. All that we internally are is not ego, but consciousness, soul or spirit. All that we externally and superficially are and do, is not ego but Nature. An executive cosmic force shapes us and dictates through our temperament and environment and mentality so shaped, through our individualised formulation of the cosmic energies, our actions and their results. Truly, we do not think, will or act but thought occurs in us, will occurs in us, impulse and act occur in us; our ego-sense gathers around itself, refers to itself all this flow of natural activities. It is cosmic Force, it is Nature that forms the thought, imposes the will, imparts the impulse. Our body, mind and ego are a wave of that sea of

force in action and do not govern it but by it are governed and directed. The sadhaka in his progress towards truth and self-knowledge must come to a point where the soul opens its eyes of vision and recognises this truth of ego and this truth of works. He gives up the idea of a mental, vital, physical "I" that acts or governs action; he recognises that Prakriti, Force of cosmic nature following her fixed modes, is in him and in all things and creatures the one and only worker.

But what has fixed the modes of Nature? Or who has originated and governs the movements of Force? There is a Consciousness—or a Conscient—behind that is the lord, witness, knower, enjoyer, upholder and source of sanction for her works; this consciousness is Soul or Purusha. Prakriti shapes the action in us; Purusha in her or behind her witnesses, assents, bears and upholds it. Prakriti forms the thought in our minds; Purusha in her or behind her knows the thought and the truth in it. Prakriti determines the result of the action; Purusha in her or behind her enjoys or suffers the consequence. Prakriti forms mind and body, labours over them, develops them; Purusha upholds the formation and evolution and sanctions each step of her works. Prakriti applies the Will-force which works in things and men; Purusha sets that Will-force to work by his vision of that which should be done. This Purusha is not the surface ego, but a silent Self, a source of Power, an originator and receiver of Knowledge behind the ego. Our mental "I" is only a false reflection of this Self, this Power, this Knowledge. This Purusha or supporting Consciousness is therefore the cause, recipient and support of all Nature's works, but is not himself the doer. Prakriti, Nature-Force, in front and Shakti, Conscious-Force, Soul-Force behind her,—for these two are the inner and outer faces of the universal Mother,—account for all that is done in the universe. The universal Mother, Prakriti-Shakti, is the one and only worker.

Purusha-Prakriti, Consciousness-Force, Soul supporting Nature,—for the two even in their separation are one and inseparable,—are at once a universal and a transcendent Power. But there is something in the individual too which is not the mental ego, something that is one in essence with this greater reality: it is a pure reflection or portion of the one Purusha; it is the Soul, Person or the embodied being, the individual self, Jivatman; it is the Self that seems to limit its power and knowledge so as to support an individual play of transcendent and universal Nature. In deepest reality the infinitely One is also infinitely multiple; we are not only a reflection or part of That but we are That; our spiritual individuality unlike our ego does not preclude our universality and transcendence. But at present the soul or self in us intent on individualisation in Nature allows itself to be confused with the idea of the ego; it has to get rid of this ignorance, it has to know itself as a reflection or portion or being of the supreme and universal Self and solely a centre of its consciousness in the world-action. But this Jiva Purusha too is not the doer of works any more than the ego or the supporting consciousness of the Witness and Knower. Again and always it is the transcendent and universal Shakti who is the sole doer. But behind her is the one Supreme who manifests through her as the dual power, Purusha-Prakriti, Ishwara-Shakti\*. The Supreme becomes

---

\* Ishwara-Shakti is not quite the same as Purusha-Prakriti; for Purusha and Prakriti are separate powers, but Ishwara and Shakti contain each other. Ishwara is Purusha who contains Prakriti and rules by the power of the Shakti within him. Shakti is Prakriti ensouled by Purusha and acts by the will of the Ishwara which is her own will and whose presence in her movement she carries always with her. The Purusha-Prakriti realisation is of the first utility to the seeker on the Way of Works; for it is the separation of the conscient being and the Energy and the subjection of the being to the mechanism of the Energy that are the efficient cause of

dynamic as the Shakti and is by her the sole originator and Master of works in the universe.

\*  
\*      \*

If this is the truth of works, the first thing the sadhaka has to do is to recoil from the egoistic forms of activity and get rid of the sense of an "I" that acts. He has to see and feel that everything happens in him by the plastic conscious or subconscious or sometimes superconscious automatism of his mental and bodily instruments moved by the forces of spiritual, mental, vital and physical Nature. There is a personality on his surface that chooses and wills, submits and struggles, tries to make good in Nature or prevail over Nature, but this personality is itself a construction of Nature and so dominated, driven, determined by her that it cannot be free. It is a formation or expression of the Self in her,—it is a self of nature rather than a self of Self, his natural and processive, not his spiritual and permanent being, a temporary constructed personality, not the true immortal Person. It is that Person that he must become. He must succeed in being inwardly quiescent, detach himself as the observer from the outer active personality and learn the play of the cosmic forces in him by standing back from all blinding absorption in its turns and movements. Thus calm, detached, a student of himself and a witness of his nature, he realises that he is the individual soul who observes the works of Nature, accepts tranquilly her results and sanctions or withholds his sanction from the impulse to her acts. At present this soul or Purusha is little more than an acquiescent spectator, influencing perhaps the action and development of the being by the pressure of its veiled consciousness, but for the most part delegating its powers or a fragment of them to the outer personality,—in fact to Nature, for this outer self is not lord but subject to her, *anis*; but, once unveiled, it can make its sanction or refusal effective, become the master of the action, dictate sovereignly a change of Nature. Even if for a long time, as there sult of fixed association and past storage of energy, the habitual movement takes place independent of the Purusha's assent and even if the sanctioned movement is persistently refused by Nature for want of past habit, still he will discover that in the end his assent or refusal prevails,—slowly with much resistance or quickly with a rapid accommodation of her means and tendencies,—she modifies herself and her workings in the direction indicated by his inner sight or volition. Thus he learns in place of mental control or egoistic will an inner spiritual control which makes him master of the nature-forces that work in him and not their unconscious instrument or mechanic slave. Above and around him is the Shakti, the universal Mother and from her he can get all his inmost soul needs and wills if only he has a true knowledge of her ways and a true surrender to the divine Will in her. Finally, he becomes aware of that highest dynamic Self within him and within Nature which is the source of all his seeing and knowing, the source of the sanction, the source of the acceptance, the source of the rejection. This is the Lord, the Supreme, the One in all, Ishwara-Shakti,

---

our ignorance and imperfection; by this realisation the being can liberate himself from the mechanical action of the nature and become free and arrive at a first spiritual control over the nature. Ishwara-Shakti stands behind the relation of Purusha-Prakriti and its ignorant action and turns it to an evolutionary purpose. The Ishwara-Shakti realisation can bring participation in a higher dynamism and a divine working and a total unity and harmony of the being in a spiritual nature.

of whom his soul is a portion, a being of that Being and a power of that Power. The rest of our progress depends on our knowledge of the ways in which the Lord of works manifests His Will in the world and in us and executes them through the transcendent and universal Shakti.

The Lord sees in His omniscience the thing that has to be done. This seeing is His Will, it is a form of creative Power, and that which He sees the all-conscious Mother, one with Him, takes into her dynamic self and embodies, and executive Nature-Force carries it out as the mechanism of their omnipotent omniscience. But this vision of what is to be and therefore of what is to be done arises out of the very being, pours directly out of the consciousness and delight of existence of the Lord, spontaneously, like light from the sun. It is not our mortal attempt to see, our difficult arrival at truth of action and motive or just demand of Nature. When the individual soul is entirely at one in its being and knowledge with the Lord and directly in touch with the original Shakti, the transcendent Mother, the supreme Will can then arise in us too in the high divine manner as a thing that must be and is achieved by the spontaneous action of Nature. There is then no desire, no responsibility, no reaction; all takes place in the peace, calm, light, power of the supporting and enveloping and inhabiting Divine.

But even before that highest approach to identity is achieved, something of the supreme Will can manifest in us as an imperative impulsion, a God-driven action; we then act by a spontaneous self-determining Force but a fuller knowledge of meaning and aim arises only afterwards. Or the impulse to action may come as an inspiration or intuition, but rather in the heart and body than in the mind; here an effective sight enters in but the complete and exact knowledge is still deferred and comes, if at all, later. But the divine Will may descend too as a luminous single command or a total perception or a continuous current of perception of what is to be done into the will or into the thought or as a direction from above spontaneously fulfilled by the lower members. When the Yoga is imperfect, only some actions can be done in this way, or else a general action may so proceed but only during periods of exaltation and illumination. When the Yoga is perfect, all action becomes of this character. We may indeed distinguish three stages of a growing progress by which, first, the personal will is occasionally or frequently enlightened or moved by a supreme Will or conscious Force beyond it, then constantly replaced and, last, identified and merged in that divine Power-action. The first is the stage when we are still governed by the intellect, heart and senses; these have to seek or wait for the divine inspiration and guidance and do not always find or receive it. The second is the stage when human intelligence is more and more replaced by a high illumined or intuitive spiritualised mind, the external human heart by the inner psychic heart, the senses by a purified and selfless vital force. The third is the stage when we rise even above spiritualised mind to the supramental levels.

In all three stages the fundamental character of the liberated action is the same, a spontaneous working of Prakriti no longer through or for the ego but at the will and for the enjoyment of the supreme Purusha. At a higher level this becomes the Truth of the absolute and universal Supreme expressed through the individual soul and worked out consciously through the nature,—no longer through a half perception and a diminished or distorted effectuation by the stumbling, ignorant and all-deforming energy of lower nature in us but by the all-wise transcendent and universal Mother. The Lord has veiled Himself and his absolute wisdom and eternal consciousness in ignorant Nature-Force and suffers her

to drive the individual being, with its complicity, as the ego; this lower action of Nature continues to prevail, often even in spite of man's half-lit imperfect efforts at a nobler motive and a purer self-knowledge. Our human effort at perfection fails, or progresses very incompletely, owing to the force of Nature's past actions in us, her past formations, her long-rooted associations; it turns towards a true and high-climbing success only when a greater Knowledge or Power than our own breaks through the lid of our ignorance and guides or takes up our personal will. For our human will is a misled and wandering ray that has parted from the supreme Puissance. The period of slow emergence out of this lower working into a higher light and purer force is the valley of the shadow of death for the striver after perfection; it is a dreadful passage full of trials, sufferings, sorrows, obscurations, stumblings, errors, pitfalls. To abridge and alleviate this ordeal or to penetrate it with the divine delight faith is necessary, an increasing surrender of the mind to the knowledge that imposes itself from within and, above all, a true aspiration and a right and unfaltering and sincere practice. "Practice unfalteringly" says the Gita, "with a heart free from despondency, the Yoga;" for even though in the earlier stage of the path we drink deep of the bitter poison of internal discord and suffering, the last taste of this cup is the sweetness of the nectar of immortality and the honey-wine of an eternal Ananda.

SRI AUROBINDO

## *Spirituality and the Modern World*

(Continued)

### II

IF a widening of consciousness is the leading tendency of modern thought, and if spirituality is its hidden goal, how can one reconcile this high endeavour with the actual chaos and blindness of the present day? Religion, as we can see, is powerless in its present decaying condition to guide man further; and it is significant too that modern science is becoming more self-conscious of its own inability to provide a sure and powerful way out of this impasse. The science of the past certainly felt more sure of itself in this respect. It had given man a sound knowledge of the material basis of life, the biological process and of evolution, as well as an insight into the psychology of ethics and behaviour. But though this quest was important as a basic need of man, its exclusive stress on outward phenomena only led to a complete neglect of man's inner and spiritual life. And from that exclusive preoccupation arose the belief that the material means alone could effect the next evolutionary step for the race. The outcome of that endeavour, as we now see, shows how futile it really was towards achieving the radical change and transformation which this step demands. By having ignored, in the past, the supreme importance of his inner being, the Reality behind the veil of his surface consciousness—the subliminal and soul-being, as well as that which is above (the Truth-plane)—modern man now finds himself oblivious of the Supreme Reality, the Divine, Who is his very source

and sustainer. For he has completely shut out the fact that the soul of man, as it has been realised by spiritual path-finders of all times, is indeed the very spark or seed-flame of the Divine. It is through this separation from the Light, erected by man himself that has sprung all the obscurity and blindness so characteristic of the modern age. From this point of view we can see that it is only by severing that veil of ignorance that the way of linking man's deepest urge with the higher Light can be realised. And this implies the awakening of soul to its own supreme stature. For it is soul alone that can penetrate the darkness and reveal to man the integral Truth which at present is only partially and separatively opening to him through his highest endeavours of thought.

It is significant to see how modern science is now turning inwards and gradually revealing something of the hidden working in and behind Nature, something of the inner Universal movement. Thus behind the physical world of our ordinary awareness there is already exposed a more subtle physical realm—the intraphysical—which has an intricate atomic movement, not entirely mechanical or predictable. Its indeterminacy seems to point to some inherent quality akin to a rudimentary will or even a dimmed suppressed consciousness of its own (quite apart in its complexity from man's own consciousness). The atom is now revealed to be an immensely concentrated dynamis compressed in its collectivity into apparent staticity. The cosmic nature of the force liberated from its splitting is in itself a potent indication of the concealed Dynamis within it. And there has also been strikingly revealed, in the smallest grain of matter as well as in the largest system of the physical universe, the self-same design and working, the same hidden force within as well as behind. In the biological sciences also there have been discovered beneath the outer phenomena of life, a world of organisation, a complex interrelation of parts working as a harmonious whole, and at the centre, as the basic life-structure, the living cell. Although each cell is itself a complex individual unit, the collectivity of the organism functions in perfect co-ordination as though not only obeying one supreme Law and Consciousness, but also that some immanent principle had inspired each cell with the exact knowledge for the carrying out of a preconceived Design. A similar inward turn is also apparent in the psychological field which is all the more obvious since man is pre-eminently the mental being. Already below the surface of man's ordinary consciousness, there has been unfolded a vast subconscious depth. And below the subconscious, the Unconscious,—the lowest levels of mind where individuality and personality apparently merge into an archaic racial consciousness representing the whole past of man.

Another tendency of modern science, apart from the inward turn but proceeding simultaneously with it, is the effort towards a synthesis. This manifests itself as a gathering together of all the strands of thought into one whole,—as though preparing for a greater step forward. In all branches of thought there is the similar endeavour to correlate the separate entities, such as matter, life and mind, into a larger unity,—the unity of Reality itself. Whereas in the past, each branch of science had attempted to maintain a strictly independent existence, in which the one strove against the others to prove itself the fundamental reality and basis of all things, the new outlook aims more towards an integration. Thus matter, as it is now being explained by physical science, is not the whole but merely the surface of our existence, and so the material entity alone cannot give us the real purpose and meaning of all the hidden complex movement that is being revealed in it. It is forced more and more to call in the

other entities, either life or latterly mind, to explain many of the inconsistencies now being exposed therein. It is the same in modern psychology where the integration of man himself is sought, as the pressing need of the times. And the pursuit of the Whole Man, in recent works, is the expression of this urgent necessity.

But the results of all this endeavour—the inward seeking and quest for synthesis—are not commensurate with the higher goal modern thought sets out to achieve. In the first place, the inner probing has taken a definite downward course, as is shown by the gross distorted application of knowledge, with all its attendant decadence and darkness. And secondly there is not only the failure to reach a true synthesis, but there is even a greater sundering and disruption of thought into a babel of many tongues, where each investigator employs a private language and terminology of his own. The whole trend of this failure is perhaps most clearly seen in the subjective investigations of psychology. By its excessive probing into the dark subconscious, modern psychology has completely disregarded the existence of any higher planes of mind, especially the luminous intuitive levels. And it is, in fact, the intuitive mind which reveals the more integral vision and wholeness for which man is now groping in the depths. But what is even more fundamental is his ignoring of the Spirit Principle—the entity above and beyond mind—and its direct representation in man himself, as the very centre of his being.

The creative arts also display the self-same trends, and being more of an individual expression they reveal these tendencies even more decisively. Both modern art and literature, with their deliberate self-conscious efforts to create a new vision, that of an interior seeing and expression, openly expose man's inner search into the Unknown. But it is clear that the resultant works, in spite of all the striving towards the higher ideal of Word or Image, present a very ugly and distorted picture. Thus, for example, the "interior monologue" and surrealist experiments of modern literature and art, in their quest for an inner reality, have become too greatly engulfed and obscured by their own subjectivity to rise to any higher flights of creative expression. Like contemporary psychology the modernist movement, in taking the inward turn, has also taken the downward plunge. And it fails to realise too, that the subconscious depth is but fragment—the lowest in fact—of the subliminal consciousness of man, and that even behind the subliminal, secreted within the very heart of it, is the true soul of man. In this way the whole movement has become a plunge into Night and darkness in which the higher Light and soul are completely shut out. Thus the whole of modern thought and endeavour is becoming increasingly chaotic and obscure, regardless even of its own threatened disruption.

That the present age is being urged towards the emergence of soul in the individual is implicit in the whole movement of the Dynamic Spirit as it expresses itself through the evolutionary process. For evolution is in its essential principle the struggle of soul through matter, life, mind,—and beyond towards an ultimate self-emergence. At first, in the material creation, the descent of the Dynamic Spirit into Matter was a transformation of Itself into an infinite number of atoms,—through a condensation process, as science says. The atom thus became the fundamental and basic centre of the physical world,—the soul of matter, we might say. The creation of matter, as the very basis of our terrestrial life, represents the uttermost transformation, or rather materialisation, of the Transcendent silence above into rock and stone below. Thus the first act of the material creation was

the imprisoning, apparently for ever, of the Dynamic Consciousness within an immutable silence and fixity. But this could not be the end of the evolutionary process.

It is with the appearance of Life that we begin to discern the Dynamic Consciousness emerging and identifying itself with the outer form of the material mould; each life-form becoming a separative organism, and each organism itself the combination of individually constituted cells. Whereas matter revealed no apparent purpose in its existence, in the life process we begin to discern a purposive development,—that the seed for example, has inherent within it the exact basic form and character of the future organism. In the plant there is as yet the utmost limitation imposed on the emerging dynamic force. In the animal however, with the first rudimentary glimmer of mind, there is the display of a freer movement which characterises animal from plant-life. It is this greater freedom of movement, in fact, that is the keynote of the newly emerging entity mind, of which man is its fullest and dominant expression. The evolution of man from the primitive to the cultural state, is the growth from the instinctive to the self-conscious. Man then becomes aware of himself existing, the reflective power of mind turns him inward to regard and become aware of an inner self which he first discerns as the "I" or ego. As mind becomes more operative in man opening him to higher planes of thought, he gradually becomes cognisant of a deeper entity beyond the ego,—a soul. It is this critical juncture in the evolutionary process that marks the stage from the cultural to the spiritual man. Where primitive man was characterised by instinct, and cultural man by a self-consciousness, the spiritual man is characterised by an emerging soul-consciousness. It is this emergence of the spiritual man that we recognise to be the central and dominating factor in and behind the present critical struggle of modern man, and which constitutes in fact the very crisis of the modern world. In the midst of this struggle of an evolving soul to manifest itself and take the lead, man must either open to and become aware of this growing entity, or else be submerged by the oncoming tide of the evolutionary force.

We can now see how the atom of matter gave way to the living cell without itself becoming annihilated, and how the cell in turn became subordinated to the new mental centre ego, so in the same way the ego must itself now open to and surrender its domination and sense of individuality to the emerging consciousness of a higher being in man. It is this emerging soul—or psychic being—that is now struggling to become the nucleus of a new and higher Personality, of which the Seer or Liberated Man of the past,—one who has completely transcended the mental confines of ego—is the representative type. But the spiritual is not only emergent, a thing still to come. It is, in its own higher status, above mind, eternally self-existent in the World of Light or Truth-Plane. And it is precisely because the spiritual factor is already there, above, as it has been thus seen from the earliest dawn of man's higher conscious awareness, that the reign of mind cannot be the end of the evolutionary movement. The descent of this higher Principle must inevitably be the consummation of man's struggle if he prepares himself and opens to this highest Truth.

It is a significant factor also of this modern age that the knowledge which is so urgently needed for healing the existing abyss of modern thought, has already developed and is in fact emerging in all its fullness for the world. This is the integral knowledge of India's dynamic spirituality. But because it is in its very nature a secret soul-knowledge, it can only be fully recognised by an emerging

soul-faculty in man himself. Even as Greek thought lay dormant for centuries before the European Renaissance, and was only fully appreciated and absorbed by an intellectually awakened man, so Indian thought and spirituality to-day awaits the soul-awakening of modern man. Eventually modern thought itself must turn and open to this higher and deeper knowledge. But the acceptance of this spiritual knowledge by modern man does not at all imply a flight into some transcendent sphere beyond life and matter and mind, it does not mean a negation of life or other-worldliness. This in fact was the fundamental error into which the religious exclusiveness of medieval India fell (and medieval Europe also before the Renaissance). Through its very seclusion and hidden secrecy the whole of Indian culture seemed to sink into that obscurity whose outward characteristic of life-negation puts its stamp completely on the entire subsequent outlook of Indian life and thought. But the Dynamic Spirituality that had persisted as an under-current from the remote times of the Vedas, would not be subdued. From those ancient solitary heights through the whole period of India's spiritual development, the self-same line of dynamic spiritual endeavour has been operative, as it has successively revealed itself through Upanishad, Gita and Tantra. It has in a sense been a descent from the height of pure intuitive illumination, that could only be realised in its plenitude by the initiated few, through a wider intellectual and discriminative level, until it spread to and embraced all who turned to the Divine, irrespective of class or creed. The tales and epics of the Puranas spread further this universal spirit over the whole of India, even reaching in her expansive age, to Indonesia and Indo-China. The Tantras represent the spiritual essence of this movement in its attempt to embrace all the diverse types and grades of humanity; until Tantra itself, by too steep a descent into the midst of life, degenerated into gross and exaggerated distortions. It was indeed during these medieval times that the whole dynamic spirituality seemed to be overwhelmed and vanquished by the negative recoil which then had gripped the whole of Indian thought. At least, it seemed so, until the first shoots of the Renaissance appeared, and with it the ancient dynamism of the far-off Vedic Seers arose once more. As it is now clearly expressed by Sri Aurobindo, (the living representative of this ancient line of dynamic Seers), it is the conscious aim of the newly-awakened spirituality, to realise the higher destiny and goal of man, and to transform human life itself into the Divine or Supramental Life.

Dynamic spirituality, like the evolutionary force itself (since it is really the growing-point of this force), demands the endeavour of wholeness, based on an integral knowledge and metaphysics. This must necessarily be, since the entire aim of this dynamic movement is directed towards a transformation, a change in the whole nature and status of man as he is at present. And the starting-point must therefore be the Whole Man, towards which modern thought itself now vaguely aims. But if the modern outlook really means to outgrow, effectively and fully, its present limitations, it must eventually turn towards and embrace this now-emerging knowledge of dynamic spirituality.

N. PEARSON

## *The Message of Sri Aurobindo*

THE teaching of the ancient sages of India affirms that behind the manifold and fleeting forms of the universe there stands a single reality, an existence infinite and eternal. All beings are united in this Being, but an illusion, a fundamental and original ignorance, veils their consciousness and they see themselves as so many individuals separate from one another. This separateness of consciousness hides from them their true being, the one and eternal Self, and chains them to their false being, the perishable ego, which is but a reflection thereof on the moving waves of the world of appearances.

The fact that the individual consciousness has for its essential reality the Self, implies that every man can rend the veil of separateness and regain perception of his identity with all beings and with the universe. The omnipresent Self can be seen or felt in its integrality in each soul or in each form, but it is easier to find it at first in one's own self. Those who have been through this experience have described the attributes of the one reality as Existence (Sat), Consciousness (Chit) and Bliss (Ananda). It is because this eternal existence sustains each living being that it exists and lives. It is because this consciousness is in the depth of each individual being that it is itself conscious and capable of feeling. It is because this bliss resides deep down in the most miserable amongst us that he agrees and continues to live in this world of sorrow.

The entry into the supreme reality has been described as a union. It is the sense of the Sanskrit word "Yoga" that we use technically to designate it. It is at one and the same time a union with the Self, a union with all beings and with the world, a union with the Being, one and transcendent, beyond all the worlds. One or the other of these experiences may predominate.

India is the country which has cultivated most extensively the psychological discipline that enables man to emerge out of his primary ignorance in order to acquire supreme knowledge. The same word "Yoga" designates this discipline. There are numerous traditional systems of Yoga. Hindu philosophy has always admitted that spiritual experience has perforce been the touchstone of its various systems. Because of this fact it has remained more alive, even though at times in its history it has likewise run the risk of being dried up in the midst of purely intellectual constructions.

But the teaching that precedes does not belong to India alone. Those who study mysticism, the living soul of religions, cannot fail to perceive the profound unity of its teaching. Religions differ; they have their dogmas, their rites, their codes, which vary according to culture, tradition, climate, geographical position, etc. But the mystics of all religions describe similar experiences and often in identical terms; they have travelled over the same stages of the same path.

Moreover, spiritual union is not the privilege of religious souls alone. Innumerable mystics belong to the borderland of orthodox religions; some have even been burnt for it. Anyway it is not necessary to adhere to any particular religious belief in order to go through the experiences we are speaking of. Generally it is the effect of the Yogic discipline. It can also arise spontaneously, as the result of a movement of inner growth—of a flowering of the soul—following an intense aspiration towards truth, a painful moral crisis, a profound aesthetic emotion.

It is then often partial, sometimes just for once and without a morrow. It is certain that a regular Yogic discipline, under the guidance of a qualified master, is the best means of avoiding shocks, stoppages and catastrophes, and of assuring a spiritual development, progressive and continuous.

Spiritual experiences assume various forms according to the parts of the being that are touched, according to individual idiosyncrasies and also according to the depths already attained. There are thus numerous categories of spiritual experience; but as soon as we wish to speak of them, we find ourselves confronted by a difficulty. The terms that one uses to describe them have no meaning except to those who have experienced them: silence, peace, light, truth, eternity, unity, reality. These words, even those that habitually carry an abstract sense, here represent inner experiences as concrete as are the objects of the physical world to our senses—even more so, for the perception is direct and immediate. As the Vedic Rishis have said, words of the supreme wisdom have a meaning only for those who are already amongst the wise.

This difficulty of language is due to a profound cause. Modern civilisation is based on intelligence. The highest faculty of the man of our days is his reason. He looks upon intelligence as an instrument of knowledge. But this is an error. We do not know anything by the intelligence. It cannot give us any certainty, any reply to the simplest of questions asked about God, the universe or ourselves. Intelligence is a wonderful classifier and constructor. It presents to us explanations, comparisons and well-ordered systems. But these are only images and models of the reality, never a direct view, and immediate perception of that reality. In order to convince ourselves of this it is enough to read modern physicists on the subject.

Intelligence is an instrument of action. By it man can seize the beings and forces of nature, and can adjust, organise, handle and utilise them to his ends. That is why man, the mental being, the thinker, even if he truly knows nothing of the reality, has nevertheless acquired considerable power over phenomenal nature. The contrast is significant.

A consequence of this fact is that true knowledge cannot dawn except when our intelligence has entered into silence and become quiet. That is why mental quietude plays such an important part in Yoga.

\* \* \*

A fundamental spiritual experience is always a change of consciousness. Even when it occurs just once, it is decisive, because the soul is never the same as before. It has experienced a new birth, a birth out of the world of ignorance into the world of knowledge.

Man is born anew, he is born of the spirit.

The contrast thus perceived between the world we live in, the domain of ignorance, of obscurity, of falsehood, of suffering and of death, and the world of underlying reality, where reign truth, light, beatitude and the life eternal, naturally leads one to consider these worlds as fundamentally separate and irreconcilable. The intellect ever inclined to put up trenchant distinctions between things and to transform these distinctions into oppositions, will fetch up therefrom a support for its own dualistic views. It will declare eternal opposition between spirit and matter, between Purusha (Spirit, silent witness) and Prakriti

(Nature, active and creative), between Brahman and Maya (cosmic illusion), between God and the world.

From there it is but one step to look upon this world as irremediably evil. Most mystics and ascetics have taken that step. For them our world is either a place of trial where we have been placed by an arbitrary decree of God, and where our conduct will decide our future life, or a phantasmagoria without real existence, an evil dream from which we must wake up as soon as possible, or, in fine, a sort of cosmic snare, to which we are glued from birth to birth by desire, born of ignorance.

One or the other of these points of view leads us to seek our liberation outside the world or far from the world. In order to withdraw from this world here one must concentrate on the other, and give to this one the bare minimum of attention. The positive side of the discipline will then be an exclusive concentration on the supreme reality, whatever be the name we give it. Moreover, as the bonds that enchain man here below, or keep him in ignorance, are desires, the logical line of conduct would be throw back far away the objects of desire or to withdraw one's self at a distance from them, to refuse all food to desire so that it may wither and die. This is the negative side of the discipline.

Some have well felt how little satisfying is the conception that the universe appears to exist only for us to escape from, or that it is a simple illusion, a dream which exists merely in the mind of the dreamer, or even that it is a sort of torture chamber created by a God who is nevertheless supposed to be kind and all-powerful. Certainly, to see the universe such as it is, one would easily veer to the opinion that if God is kind He is not all-powerful, and that if He is all-powerful He is not kind.

On the other hand, these views of the world, pushed to their ultimate conclusions, would inevitably lead to an atrophy of the faculties of expression and to the renunciation of the domination over matter. All activity has the character of a bondage, for one does not see that there can be any activity urged by aught but desire—except for helping other men to attain illumination and to escape from the world in their turn. It is then a negation of artistic creation, of scientific knowledge, of a greater mastery over nature and of a better organisation, economic and social.

This negation goes against some of the profoundest tendencies of the race, tendencies that cannot possibly be obliterated. A reconciliation is undoubtedly necessary between them and the other pole of human idealism,—aspiration towards the eternal and immutable reality.

\*

\*      \*

It is here that Sri Aurobindo, in taking up again and pushing to their logical end the thoughts and experiences of the Vedic Rishis and in completing them and developing them by his own personal experiences, has brought before us a new urge towards the spiritual life of humanity.

The Supreme is at once the One and the Many; He is simultaneously immanent and transcendent; He is at once personal and impersonal: and yet He is beyond all these formulations. Each religion, each system has seized one aspect of the Absolute and set it up as the sole truth. But every aspect is true, relatively and partially, and is false when it puts itself in opposition to others. It is a great

tragedy that the understanding of man cannot seize any particular truth without putting it at once in opposition to its counter-truth, which is as true as itself. As soon as one rises above the discursive intellect, one realises the fallacious character of these oppositions. The antinomies are only problems set forth badly, pseudo-problems. Even science has recently encountered remarkable examples of such problems, which have given painful shocks to many hardened spirits; the material space, finite but without limits; light, at once undulatory and corpuscular in its nature; matter, identical with energy.

Nothing exists but the Supreme. If He is all, He is all the contraries, all the opposites, even while He remains the Absolute and is beyond everything. All that exists has come out of Him, remains in Him, remains Himself. The separation is only an appearance. It is He who lives, feels and thinks behind a limited consciousness in all beings. This limitation of the supreme consciousness, its burial in matter in order to evolve a complex universe by a progressive development of the powers of this consciousness, is the key to the universe. Matter itself is not anti-divine. It is the same in substance as in consciousness; it is a concretisation thereof. In a way, matter is spirit condensed; there is no essential difference between the two, all the powers of the spirit are buried, asleep in matter. The aim of evolution is to reveal them, to manifest them.

If that is so, the world is not the contrary of God, it is not a place from which God is absent. He is here, present all over. It is He that lives, feels and suffers in every one of us and who, in us and through us, reveals progressively His attributes: beauty, knowledge, power and love. The world is not a creation out of nothing, outside of God; it is not an illusion destitute of reality (even though the view that we have of it be necessarily limited and false); no more is it a place of trial wherein created beings have been placed in order to expiate a fault that they have never committed. It is rather a field of experiment where one of the innumerable possibilities that exist potentially in the infinite is elaborating itself on a gigantic scale. No doubt other worlds exist, have existed or will exist, that will unfold other such possibilities. This world of ours is not the only one of its kind.

Our universe bears the stamp of separatism. This initial cleavage in the consciousness has permitted the multiplicity of individual centres thereof. Separation has brought about the illusion of freedom; it has also by the loss of global knowledge and a lack of comprehensive vision brought about ignorance. This freedom and this ignorance imply the possibility of self-deception, and consequently error, weakness, opposition, disharmony,—in one word, evil. Evil is the price paid for apparent liberty, for the illusion that the individual has of being separate from all and of having the power to oppose all. This illusion is, no doubt, necessary for a time; it marks a stage in the development of the consciousness of self. By it, the cosmic realisation will attain a depth, richness, a power which would not otherwise have existed. The fall into the abyss will have permitted the conquest of the highest summits.

As all movement of consciousness has inevitably to develop all its consequences and to bear its fruits, separative ignorance has reaped an ample harvest thereof,—falsehood, hatred, sorrow, death.....But these attributes have not an inevitable character at all. They are the consequences of a veil, of a limitation of consciousness and are not attached to the material universe in itself. They will then disappear with the tearing of the veil and the re-establishment of consciousness in its integrality. The harmony is possible here in the material world;

matter is capable of containing and of manifesting the glorious perfection of the spirit.

Thus understood, the actual imperfection of our world receives a satisfactory explanation. It is in reality transitory, tied to only a phase of cosmic development. The universe is not static, it is essentially dynamic, in constant evolution, as much from the physical point of view as from the subtler view-point of consciousness. And this evolution has a direction; it aims towards a manifestation of the latent powers of consciousness. So that what appears to us as a negation of these powers (obscurity, falsehood, suffering, death) should, if this point of view be correct, be seen as a movement in retrogression.

That it is so, can, at the present moment, appear rather as an article of faith than as an ascertained fact. On the morrow of the severe trial that humanity has been through, face to face with the prospect of another war still more devastating, seeing in what chaos moral, intellectual, economic, political and artistic, man is struggling, is it possible to uphold the notion of a progress as vast and comprehensive as the one envisaged here? Nevertheless if we reflect, we shall agree that the first sign of any progress is a more pointed consciousness of its necessity, the first index that an imperfection can be overcome is that it hurts us more acutely. There have been at all times individuals who have realised to their sorrow the imperfect nature of this world; but they have ever been but few. Never has this imperfection been as apparent, as painfully felt by the greatest number as today. Never has an aspiration as sincere towards a better state of things been expressed so universally. At the same time it is being recognised that many of these imperfections regarded till now as irremediable, are not really so; freedom from physical needs, immunity from diseases, prolongation of life, these are no longer classed as utopian or impossible. A new sense of unity is becoming clear. Methods of scientific investigation reveal this unity in the domain of matter right up to the farthest limits of the universe. An economic inter-dependence joined to a greater proximity spatial (means of transport) and temporal (radio) carries this unity over into the domain of intelligent life. The globe has become too small and the methods of destruction too powerful to permit divisions and antagonisms to last much longer. It has become evident that mankind has perforce to become one or perish.

But it is not from a change of government, of the constitution or of the social system that man can expect a cure for his ills. The upsetting that is needed is of a deeper kind; it is a transformation of the consciousness that is called for. It is necessary for humanity to move on in this direction; it is imperative that at least a select few, who are capable of making themselves heard by others and followed by others, should go through this experience before a total reversal of values can establish itself, before a new ideal, creative of an entirely new civilisation, can surge forth. No system of philosophy, no religious revival, no social revolution can take the place of the necessary and inevitable spiritual transformation.

\*

\* \* \*

The terrestrial evolution is realised by a double movement of descent and ascent. Matter on the physical plane, pressed by the forces of the vital and mental planes, of those worlds of life and thought which along with our world of matter constitute an evolutionary universe, has organised itself and produced life.

The animate forms have developed progressively throughout the prehistoric, vegetable and animal species. In the animal, the forces of the mental plane have successfully fashioned an instrument permitting them to assume contact with matter; thought is born in this world. Consciousness buried in the substance of the mineral world has thus traversed by a slow and multiform ascent the stages of the two kingdoms in order to arrive at man: *Homo sapiens*. The intellect is in full bloom. Man is the brightest product of our universe.

But has he the character of a work final and finished? Vain indeed is he who would dare to affirm such a thing. Man is simply the present term of this evolution; he is not the ultimate term. In truth, there is no reason, except probably in man's conceit, why evolution should cease with him and not produce a subsequent type, which will differ from him as much as he differs from the animal, or the animal from the plant.

This next step in the ascent of embodied consciousness will arrive under the pressure of forces of a realm higher than the mental. Sri Aurobindo calls it simply the Supramental plane.

For a long time it has been held that the evolution of living species proceeded by a slow and gradual progression of one species out of another, without any sudden jump. But modern Biology admits the probability of the contrary. The transition from one variety to another occurs by an abrupt leap, a mutation, and it seems to be the same for the species, even though the fact has never been actually witnessed. No doubt there is a period of secret preparation when the various factors arrange themselves in order to allow the mutation, as well as a period of adaptation and flowering out that follows the mutation.

Sri Aurobindo asserts that we have arrived at an important turning-point in human history, where the descent of new powers of consciousness and their establishment on the earth are about to occur. On the crest of an evolutionary wave man has to make room for a new being.

Can one form an idea of what the new being is going to be? It would doubtless be better not to attempt a guess. Just as the monkey could not foresee what man would be like, man is probably incapable of anticipating and forming an idea as to what his successor will be like. He would be prone to imagine him as a glorified man, a being in whom the characteristic human faculties (intelligence, memory, will, etc.) will reach their zenith: a super-man, in the Nietzschean sense. But he will certainly be nothing like it. That which will characterise him will be a new quality of consciousness, new faculties of the spirit, and not a development, not even a greater perfection of the existing faculties. These will not disappear; but the first place will belong to the highest.

In any case, the word 'progress' has a meaning, even though it be not the simple and childish one given to it by the Positivists of the nineteenth century, and even though it does not imply a state of technical development and increase of material well-being, such as that of the twentieth century. The faith in man's unlimited perfectibility, the fundamental optimism of man's heart and mind are completely justified.

It would be by the perception of the nature of the powers of the supermind that we would be able to have the surest indication of the direction of the new stride which nature is making ready. The task is difficult, for it relates to a domain of consciousness which has, up till now, not been revealed or manifested on the earth; it is closed to the intelligence of man in the same way that the consciousness of Pasteur or of Pascal is closed to the understanding of the ape. The

existence of mystics, of seers, of the inspired, of those who are clearly "in advance of the race" proves that the faculties of the new man will be synthetic and intuitive in nature, and that one of his prerogatives will be the definite establishment of his consciousness in the Supreme Reality.

That is why those who are awake to a spiritual aspiration, and are permeated with an intense desire to know and to live the Reality, eternal and omnipresent, will be the fittest to grasp the meaning of the new perspective opening out before them:—

"The spiritual life will draw its sustenance not from desire but from a pure and selfless spiritual delight of essential existence. And not only the vital nature in us whose stamp is desire, but the mental being too must undergo a new birth and a transfiguring change. Our divided, egoistic, limited and ignorant thought and intelligence must disappear; in its place there must stream in the catholic and faultless play of a shadowless divine illumination which shall culminate in the end in a natural self-existent Truth-Consciousness free from groping half-truth and stumbling error. Our confused and embarrassed ego-centred small-motived will and action must cease and make room for the total working of a swiftly powerful, lucidly automatic, divinely moved and guided Force. There must be implanted and activised in all our doings a supreme, impersonal, unfaltering and unstumbling will in spontaneous and untroubled union with the Will of the Divine. The unsatisfying surface play of our feeble egoistic emotions must be ousted and there must be revealed instead a secret, deep and vast psychic heart within that waits behind them for its hour; all our feelings impelled by this inner heart in which dwells the Divine will be translated into calm and intense movements of a twin passion of divine Love and manifold Ananda. This is the definition of a divine humanity or a supramental race. This, not an exaggerated or even a sublimated energy of human intellect and action, is the type of superman whom we are called to evolve by our Yoga." (Sri Aurobindo—*The Synthesis of Yoga*, Chapter III.)

Terrestrial evolution has so far proceeded under the direction of nature, acting as the executive agent of the Divine, without any conscious participation of the beings drawn along by this evolution. But man has now attained a position of full spiritual responsibility and the next step should be taken by an awakened and untrammelled will. The return to the Divine should be conscious and deliberate, and not automatic and fortuitous. That is why man should, in order to bring it about, collaborate with God; Yoga, union with the divine, is the fruit of this collaboration. Such is the *raison d'être*, reason for existence of Yoga.

What is the method of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga? It is at once simple and complex. Simple, because its guiding principles are easy to grasp and few in number; complex, because it has to adapt itself to the infinite diversity of the life and being of man.

Sri Aurobindo has called his Yoga, the Integral Yoga. He has conserved and utilised the essential elements of the ancient yogic methods. The starting-point is a synthesis of the three classic paths of yoga, which are: *the way of works*, in which union with the Divine is obtained by a consecration of will and action to the Divine, work being accomplished as an offering, without any attachment to the fruit thereof and with a perfect equality of soul with regard to its result; *the way of devotion*, which leads one to the goal by the path of an ever-growing intimacy with the divine Presence, by an exclusive adoration and all-absorbing love; *the way of knowledge*, where the path is a liberating vision of

the One in all and of all in the One, leading to the perception of the activity of the universal Spirit in all things.

To these methods must be added the psychological discipline known as Raja Yoga, which insists on the realisation of mental silence as a preparation for the acquirement of superior knowledge. According to Sri Aurobindo all these various ways are to be utilised, simultaneously or successively, in order to approach the Supreme Reality from all sides, to establish with It an affinity as varied and as profound as possible, and to get all the human faculties to participate actively in this union. Nevertheless, the whole thing is as yet but a preparation, a preliminary phase of Yoga which leads to the liberation of the individual consciousness and to its entry into the Divine Reality. It should be followed by a second phase aiming at the transformation of human nature.

A spiritual experience has always a twofold aspect: liberation and mastery. It is often a bond broken, a door opened, a cloud dissipated, a heavy load laid down; it is an ascent into an atmosphere of purity and of light. Then, as a consequence thereof, the liberated consciousness, from its new position, sets itself to act on the parts left behind, to enlighten them, to purify them,—or rather to direct, or cause to descend, on them the purifying forces of the Spirit.

And as this transformation has to be integral, there is no question of omitting from its scope any element of human nature, any faculty, any individual attainment. All that there is has to be taken and accepted as a starting-point, such as it is. But no more can anything be preserved as it is at the starting-point, darkened, deformed, perverted by the forces of ignorance. Above all, individual egoism and desire must be eliminated, for they are at the very root of all perversion. The desire-soul in us must surrender itself to the profound divine law. Then, and then only, becomes possible the perfection of the intelligence, of the life and of the body.

The destruction of desire and egoism cannot be achieved solely by methods of repression. These methods can prevent the outward manifestations of desire, but they run the risk of burying it again within the vault of the subconscious, where it lies hidden beyond the reach of the conscious will, abiding its hour. The enemy thus continues to exist, all the more dangerous as one believes it to be dead. Besides, ascetic repression brings about a drying up and a folding back. Along with the useless weeds, many plants in flower perish. Now, the disciple of integral Yoga aims at accomplishment, not at amputation—at a plenitude rich with the powers of the spirit, not at a sterile impoverishment. The task is thus more arduous; it must be approached in some other way.

One of the first findings made by a person who plunges into the inner life is about the complexity of his nature—mental, vital and physical. He finds himself in the presence of a large number of distinct elements, each having its distinct existence, and each trying mostly to go its own way. The inner being is a field of conflict of many contrary tendencies. The first necessity is to unify these divergent forces, and get them to submit to the central will. It is a long and difficult process, if one wishes to undo the knots and not to cut them. One after another, each part has to be taken up, studied, understood, converted and transformed. Each thing has to be put back in its place, purified of egoistic desires, surrendered to the guidance within, restored and limited to its proper function.

For the work of restoration, purification and transformation, the aspirant's own knowledge and power are altogether insufficient. He realises soon that he is utterly powerless in the face of this work; by his own efforts he can obtain

only limited, unstable and superficial results. The work can be accomplished only by the divine Conscious Force acting for the perfection of his Yoga, the divine Mother as Yoga Shakti. The secret of Yoga is to bring about the descent of this divine Shakti, so that she can take charge of the labour of transformation and lead it to a triumphant issue.

To bring about the descent of divine Grace, one way alone is given to man and that is an inner attitude made up of three essential movements: aspiration, self-giving and a rejection of all false movements.

The initial aspiration towards light, peace, purity and perfection should be enlightened and intensified, and should become a great ardent flame that burns straight up without a flicker. It is more than a set prayer, it is a call of the heart to the Divine accompanied by a will to open the whole nature and to transform it. To this call, the Grace of the Divine ever responds, but self-giving is the condition for it to be received and for it to be able to act.

The giving of self, of all that one possesses and of each one of its movements, has to be sincere, that is to say without any calculation or reservation. That implies a surrender to the Divine Will as soon as it is perceived and as far as the disciple can discern it. But it is not an inert and passive surrender to all the movements of universal nature—instincts, passions, thoughts etc.—that is meant. Far from it. On the contrary, a vigilant discernment should disclose to us, through all subterfuge and hypocrisy, all that comes to us from the forces of ignorance and we should drive it back without hesitation or weakness.

The rejection needed is of desires, of impulsions and passions, of attachments and of preferences, of egoism, pride, lust, idleness, greed, jealousy, envy, fear,—the rejection of doubt, of obscurity, of stupidity, of obstinacy and of ill-will,—the rejection of habits and demands, of opinions and of preconceived ideas. All this, all that obstructs the action of the divine Shakti should at first be recognised as not being ourselves, as not belonging to us, as coming to us from the outside. It is thus easier to refuse it our consent, and then, with divine help, to liberate ourselves from its hold and to drive it out. The light, the purity and the power which descend from on high require that we accept them freely and that we deny ourselves to all that is contradictory and incompatible.

Surrender is a thing which many find a difficulty in accepting. To the modern spirit it appears to lessen the dignity and independence of the human being. The reason for it is that surrender to the divine will has been often preached in an interested fashion, with a view to encourage resignation and the acceptance of a physical or moral hold in individuals. But the abuse or the perversion of a thing does not take off anything from its value or from its utility. It is enough to be on one's guard and to cultivate spiritual discernment. Submission is not resignation. The true Yogi is not a person resigned. He endures injustice and oppression as he endures falsehood, ugliness and weakness. If he does not, like a rebel, react violently to it, if he even appears to accept it for a time, it is primarily because he knows that to him who has given himself to the Divine everything comes in its time and that he should take it all as part of his Yogic discipline. But it is, above all, because he sees that the best remedy for unrighteousness is to bring the Divine Truth down early, to ensure that in the opaque clouds of ignorance a rent appears and allows a ray of radiant truth to come through and touch sorrowful humanity. He realises the fact that the unknown sage who meditates in the silence of his Himalayan retreat in order to enlarge and deepen the contact between his human consciousness and the divine

consciousness, accomplishes a work infinitely richer in consequence for the future of mankind than that which he would have been able to accomplish by throwing himself into direct action with only his human instruments to help him. It is to this truth that India owes the importance of her spiritual heritage and of her contribution to the uplift of the world of tomorrow.

Freedom as against universal nature (physical, vital and mental) is good and legitimate, for she is being perverted by forces from whose control we have to free ourselves. But freedom against the Divine would not have any meaning at all for him who wishes to become one with Him. If the word 'liberty' swells the chest and makes the heart of man beat, it is because it raises an echo which surpasses by far all that man has so far understood by that word. True liberty is that of the inner self as against nature. A man truly free is he whom nothing down here can bind, nothing can hold back, on whom neither vanity nor anger nor fear can lay hand, he who, with a clear vision and impelled by the Divine, acts without a personal motive, without desire and without attachment. One who asserts his right to follow his passions, or to pursue his interests, whether they be personal or those of his family, of his class or of his country, is not free.

Another confusion, which occurs frequently, is not without danger. It is a fact that, in the process of spiritual liberation, the disciple ceases to feel bound by social conventions, by current notions of good and evil and even rules of morality. They appear to him to be relative and arbitrary. He realises that every civilisation has its own rules and conventions and that a social order quite as good as ours can rest on bases entirely different. But the disciple can forsake these rules (moreover, it is rather the rules that forsake him) only after having found the inner guide and the unerring control which replace all outer regulation. And certainly the inner guidance is more exacting than any moral code. To abandon the laws of morality only to become again a slave to one's passions, or to cover oneself with a pretended freedom from prejudices as with a screen, in order to hide one's excesses, is a downfall and not a progress.

\*

\* \* \*

We shall speak a few words about the part played by the master in the spiritual development of the disciple. It can be said that his action proceeds in three different ways. Firstly, transmission by written or oral teaching, instruction, advice. Secondly, transmission by example; indeed the master is a person who has already realised oneness with the Divine and whose life is a manifestation of this oneness. Thirdly, transmission by invisible influence and occult action. This last is the most important of the three; it is a tangible and constant reality for the advanced disciple.

For one who recognises the universe to be a gradual manifestation of the Divine, it is easy to admit a constant action of the Divine therein—under forms more or less apparent, more or less direct, more or less effectual. The supernatural enters into the natural the whole time. The determinism, apparently rigorous, of universal nature shows superposed planes of causality which penetrate into one another. There is a determinism physico-chemical, a determinism vital, a determinism mental. Every time that the consciousness opens itself to forces from a higher plane, a determinism of another order is superimposed on the first and modifies it entirely. In proportion as our consciousness can open

to the supramental forces, the determinism, apparently inevitable, of our evolutionary world can be broken. Thenceforth the cosmic action of the aspects and manifestations of the one Supreme Consciousness—the gods, the avatars, the incarnations—ceases to be an enigma or a superstition. It becomes possible to understand that, for the disciple, the Guru (the spiritual master) is, in a real and effective way, a special and chosen channel of the divine Grace.

Without the support of the hand that guides and uplifts, without the direction of the vision that discerns and enlightens, without the aid of the heart that consoles and sustains, the disciple would have, indeed, small chance of surmounting the formidable difficulties of the task which he has undertaken, of avoiding dangers, of stepping over asperities, of passing amidst traps and quagmires, of going through doubt and discouragement, in short, of following the path, "narrow as a razor's edge", as the ancient scriptures designate it.

In the working of the Divine power one can distinguish three stages which, however, are not clear-cut and run into one another. The first is the stage in which personal effort predominates. The triple attitude, described higher up, perfects itself and results, at first in consecration, then in an integral giving of the self to the Divine. The second is a transition from the human to the divine action. It is marked by a growing influx of the power that is descending, by a vigilant surrender and a supple and conscious response to this action. In the last stage, there is no longer any personal effort or any established method; effort gives place to a blossoming, spontaneous, puissant and happy, of the Divine flower out of the heart of the lower nature, purified and perfected:

"The Supreme has laid his luminous hand upon a chosen human vessel of his miraculous Light and Power and Ananda." (Sri Aurobindo—The Synthesis of Yoga, Chapter II.)

\* \* \*

Such is the vision which Sri Aurobindo spreads out before our eyes. His works present a conception about the world, about the place which man occupies in the world, and about his destiny, which is capable of satisfying the most ardent idealist and, at the same time, of paying due regard to the demands of the rationalistic brain. He whom it interests will be able to find therein a comprehension of most of the religious symbols and myths, obscure and little understood, of our days. It englobes and explains the experience of the mystics and the occult tradition. It proceeds from the most ancient Vedic texts and is in agreement with the ideas of modern science. Lastly, it gives a meaning to the present-day convulsions of humanity in labour. Such a synthesis has never been made before.

The pages of this study are not restrictive. They present what we consider to be the essential points but do not exhaust the subject. Many other aspects could have been approached; some that are connected with vast problems have only been touched upon.

We would go against the spirit of his writing if we conveyed the impression that Sri Aurobindo offers us a philosophic doctrine. No doubt, his teaching can be justified intellectually as well as any other, if not better. The reader is even struck by the logical sequence and the compact nature of the arguments put forward. But the author himself tells us that the ultimate proof is experience—not experience of the senses, but Yogic experience, internal, equally valid and equally convincing.

Some people will not easily admit this proof, alleging that introspection is not a sure method of knowledge. It is, they say, subject to illusion and error as much as the other. Both demand that one accepts certain conditions, one submits to the desired sway, in order to avoid illusion and eliminate error. Inner knowledge has, straight off, a higher value than perceptible knowledge in this that it is direct and that, proceeding by identity, it attains even the reality of the object without passing through the distorting intermediary of a transmission by the senses or by an image of the mind. In any case, Sri Aurobindo has established that this knowledge can, when it is intellectually translated, furnish a view of the world perfectly reasonable and satisfying. But still it is not a system of philosophy; it is a teaching of one who knows and who sees.

If this teaching is not a system of philosophy, much less is it a religious doctrine; it contains no dogma. Sri Aurobindo offers us what he knows and sees; he gives his explanations and his advice in reply to questions asked. But he imposes no view of his on anybody. Sri Aurobindo's aim is to put the disciple in a position to know for himself. It is for this personal experience that he prepares him and invites him. He asserts constantly that in Yoga a little practice is worth more than a great deal of theory. Intellectual study is a preparation which the disciple can pass by; its principal aim is to calm the questioning and reasoning intelligence and to ensure that it surrenders itself, satisfied, to a mode of knowledge which transcends it.

It is quite possible to start in Yoga without a belief in God, without even admitting that there can be experiences transcending our senses (provided that one does not become an obstinate negator). What is indispensable is an ardent aspiration of the heart and mind towards a life, truer, finer, purer and vaster, and a readiness to give all in order to realise it.

Sri Aurobindo makes no pretension to novelty. His teaching is a formulation in the language of our epoch of a part of the supreme knowledge. That which he has translated is unchanging and eternal, even though the translation, the formulation, has necessarily to be partial, and adapted to the conditions of the moment. Many sages of the past felt beforehand what has now been discovered, many seers foresaw the marvellous vision. They have left to other men some allegories, by way of encouragement: the kingdom of God on earth, the new Golden Age, the second advent of Christ, the Magnum Opus of mystic alchemists. .... But Sri Aurobindo announces to us the proximity of its realisation and, by his presence, gives us the assurance thereof. For that we bear towards him an infinite gratitude.

#### PAVITRA

(Translated from French by C. C. Dutt)

## Doubts and the Life Divine

[ A LETTER ]

I MYSELF have gone through many of your doubts and waverings. I have none of them any more. I may not be able to dispel all your difficulties, but some remarks may be of help to you.

You seem to be struggling against three kinds of obstructions. The first is a fundamental uncertainty about the Divine's presence. This uncertainty cannot be removed by reasoning only. I dare say I can intellectually make out some sort of case for the Divine's presence, but I cannot wholly prove anything. Neither, for that matter, can you wholly prove to me the contrary by mere logic. This should make you see that we are in a region where more than the mind's argumentation can be of genuine avail. The mystical path and the mystical illumination demand a certain deep instinct to start you off and sustain you. When this instinct is strong and takes a central place in your being, the mind's doubt about the Divine's presence becomes ineffective and you are aware of that presence in even the most dark and distressing situations. To make the most of this instinct you have to turn towards somebody who has followed it in himself firmly and far—a Guru. Then you are enabled to go beyond living faith into a living radiance, for you contact the soul in you that is always filled with the Divine. I can't say that such a radiance is very intense in me, much less that I have illumined knowledge or the supreme realisation. I am only on the threshold of the mystical life, but Sri Aurobindo has helped me to stand there and not fall hopelessly back. And he has helped me mainly by giving something of his own being, by casting on me something of his own atmosphere. Of course his writings have greatly influenced me, but I could not have properly absorbed their influence without my approaching him primarily for spiritual rather than intellectual aid—a direct touch of his own Yogic state rather than an indirect touch through a mental exposition or arrangement of his experience.

The first thing, therefore, to do if you are mystically inclined and yet have misgivings about the Divine's presence is to open yourself to one you feel to be a Yogi. Nothing else will truly and basically help you. And the emergence of the soul's radiance will also go a long way towards curing you of the restlessness born of the second kind of obstruction—namely, the puzzlement *vis-à-vis* the problems of karma and rebirth, death and after-death, the why and whither of the universe, the *raison d'être* of pain and suffering, poverty and destitution. Even if no complete answer is forthcoming at the start, you will have a profound tranquillity. The mind may go on revolving its problems, but you will not be upset by them—and nothing will make you deviate from the conviction that there is surely an answer to even the most baffling riddle. What is more, you will feel that since the Divine is there, it is only by getting in full communion with Him that the complete and satisfying solution can be arrived at, for the mind has not made the world nor woven its manifold texture and so cannot grasp in an "interior" way its warp and woof. The Divine's consciousness is not like the mind, it is not divided from the essence of things but is aware of

it by an identity because that essence is ultimately the Divine Himself. If there is such a consciousness—and we cannot doubt its existence once the soul in us has put its radiant finger upon our normal being—then evidently our perplexities can end only by our rising into it. The soul by itself is able to give quite an amount of instinctive understanding, but it cannot provide total knowledge. To get that knowledge vaster and higher realisations have to be won through the soul: the Cosmic Consciousness has to be compassed and the Transcendental Truth has to be attained.

Here, however, I must say that the Cosmic Consciousness and the Transcendental Truth have many shades and grades. Various Yogis have given out of their realisations various answers to the enigmas that are plaguing you. These answers they have couched in mental terms according to the type and quality of their minds. As far as India is concerned, there are, for example, Buddha's answer and Shankara's and Ramanuja's and Madhwa's and Vivekananda's. I have mentioned answers more or less philosophically expressed. Some have the character of philosophical intuition rather than philosophical intellection: those of the Upanishads. Others are a blend of the two: the Gita's. Still others have a symbolic poetic character: the Rig Veda's. Some have an air of homely wisdom and a species of commonsense-coloured depth: Ramakrishna's. Sri Aurobindo has an affinity, in the basic message, with the Rig Veda, the early Upanishads, the Gita and the gospel of Ramakrishna, though he brings in addition to the manner of the seer, the poet or the pragmatist a fully formed philosophical expression which can compare quite well with any in the past. The affinity I speak of arises from the many-sidedness which is present in the Rig Veda, the early Upanishads, the Gita and Ramakrishna's gospel. Sri Aurobindo is not inclined to make trenchant divisions and to erect an extreme into the whole truth. He is disposed to be comprehensive and global and not confine himself to a limited and exclusive intensity of insight. He favours no sharp cutting-asunder of the Gordian knot of the universe's mystery: his the attempt to unravel all the devious strands and show how each of them has a part to play and does not deserve to be ripped suddenly and summarily. An Aurobindonian does not run down any Yogi; he refuses, however, to be single-tracked. Raman Maharshi, for instance, has a wonderfully luminous realisation of the Silent Self and all that he says is charged with its truth. Just because a man follows Sri Aurobindo, he does not reject Raman Maharshi as a false guide: the latter has caught hold of spiritual Reality—but in one aspect out of many, an aspect that cannot be overlooked or left unseized but is not the sole one. If it were the sole one, a devotee like Chaitanya who is all absorbed in a Personal Active Deity would be a hallucinated fool. Even Buddha would be reckoned as misguided since, though he too was the apostle of a Supreme Silence and Impersonality, he did not call it the Self but named it Non-Being or Nirvana. The large variety of spiritual experience creates the presumption not, as sceptics suppose, that here is a field of hopeless contradiction and therefore purely subjective individual illusion but that here is some Reality which has a thousand faces and that individuals usually see one face or another. A many-sidedness and comprehensiveness and globality seem to be eminently called for. Those who have tended towards them appear to have got nearest the ultimate Truth-Consciousness. Sri Aurobindo goes even beyond all past realisation and expression of them, so much so that he will not reject any part of our nature as lying for ever outside the possibility of divinisation: even our most material being has, for him, a supporting truth or archetype in the Divine

Reality and can be transformed by a descent of that archetype. If many-sidedness and comprehensiveness and globality are pointers to the highest Truth, then Sri Aurobindo by his super-synthesis, his absolute integrality, can surely be regarded as "more advanced on the spiritual path, more perfect, more correct, more enlightened than others". And it is not unreasonable to suppose that one who is such is likely also to give us the last word on sundry problems literary and artistic and philosophical and political and sociological, provided there is ample development in him of the literary, artistic, philosophical, political and sociological consciousness. This, of course, does not debar a disciple of Sri Aurobindo's from discussing matters with him and making suggestions to him. Sri Aurobindo encourages discussion and invites suggestion, for often a lively give and take of the mind is the best means of preparing the right mental state for a formulation of the truth of things.

I personally find Sri Aurobindo's answers very satisfying because of their integrality: he brings into his vision all the aspects of a case and presses towards such a solution as would draw out the truths of them and combine these truths into a final light. His light is not exclusively of this colour or that, but like the sun's, a sovereign lustre in which the hues of the entire rainbow are held in an ultimate fusion. And with that light playing, the tone and turn of the reply you imagine an Aurobindonian giving when the undesirable phenomena of life challenge him are impossible. I do not maintain my "peace of mind" by a reply like the one you construct for me: "Oh, this is quite simple and clear; this is due to that and that is the result of this; God is in all and all are in God; the world is the manifestation of the One in its process of becoming the Many; there is in fact no sorrow, grief, suffering, and evil but all is an appearance and the Inner Being is indestructible and eternal". Mind you, I am not saying that the reply you imagine is quite off the mark. It has a certain truth, though a limited one: what in it is uncharacteristic of an Aurobindonian is as much the facile form of it as the limitation of its truth. It seems to hail from a rather queer creature—a robustly optimistic Browningesque *Mayavadin*! An Aurobindonian is not a *Mayavadin* nor robustly optimistic; he is a Yogi radiantly realistic: he does not brush aside obnoxious things with an easy wave of the hand and a cheerful shutting of the eyes as if by ignoring them he could prove them to be not there: he does know that the Inner Being is indestructible and eternal and that behind all the discord and distress the divine felicity abides and the divine unity reigns, but he faces fully the terrible surface of things and regards it as very real indeed though a reality of the surface and he strives his utmost to change and transform and divinise it instead of fleeing from it as if it were *Maya*, an illusory appearance. No Yoga has the shallow Browningesque attitude—it may be optimistic, yet without minimising sorrow, grief, suffering and evil. What does Sri Krishna in the Gita say? "Thou that hast come into this transitory and unhappy world, turn thy love to Me." Surely there is no cheap cheerfulness here. Deeply and poignantly the misery of time is felt; but together with it is felt also the possibility of a huge and happy escape by way of love of the Divine, the Inner Being, the indestructible and eternal Reality. Indeed, all Yoga is radiantly realistic—even Buddha with his notion that all cosmos is an illusion recognises intensely the *dukkha* of it, while dwelling with great exultation on the exit he has found from this *dukkha*. Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga is all the more realistic by not subscribing to illusionism in the Buddhist sense nor even to the Gita's doctrine that though action in the world is never to be disdained as a revolving in a field of *Maya* our true and final abode is in some supra-cosmic status after death has brought the God-realised soul its liberation from bodily

existence. Sri Aurobindo is not content with substituting *Lila*, or God's play in the world, for *Maya* or the universal illusion of activity. *Lila* too looks beyond, it does not offer a complete fulfilment here and now of the whole self and nature of us, it does not provide for total divinisation. And in as much as it does not, it stresses the Beyond as the goal and puts earth-life into a minor place and tends to see it as not equally real as the Beyond. Sri Aurobindo never stresses the Beyond at the expense of earth-life; the call of earth is to him as insistent and as real as that of heaven, and a final liberation into the latter does not solve for him the acute problems around us. Unless sorrow, grief, suffering and evil are accepted as realities that will brook no forsaking of them, the Aurobindonian cannot reach the consummation of his Yoga. He must tackle them until they are changed and replaced not by a Beyond but by a divinisation on earth itself of earth's constituents. Yes, he is most realistic. At the same time, he exceeds all other types of Yogis by being most radiantly so, for he has the largest hope—the hope of transforming what others either accept only for the time being or as only part brightenable by the Divine's presence. He does not merely realise the Consciousness in which everything is for ever and unchangeably divine—God is in all and all are in God. He adds to it another vision and experience—God not only *in* all but coming *out* in all, all not only *in* God but bringing *out* God. This simultaneously implies for him an unflinching realism and world-labour on the one hand and on the other an unqualified radiance and world-fulfilment. And an Aurobindonian's reply to the challenge of an imperfect world would be: "Life is no simple scheme of events and it has many chequered passages; its intricacy cannot be explained away nor its difficulty met on the cheap; the process of the One becoming the Many is hardly the entire *rationale* of a world emerging from the brute blindness of matter into the hungers of life and the dreamings of mind; God's presence is indeed everywhere and yet in terms of evolution He has still to be everywhere present; the world's essence is divine but the world's appearance which is undivine is no phantasm and it has not to be left at last by the ascending soul but to be transformed by the descending Spirit; the Inner Being's indestructibility and eternity are insufficient for me, the most outer being also must become a stuff that neither perishes nor remains a miserable victim to fate and chance and the powers of darkness".

Mention of the integral divinisation which is the aim of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga brings me to the third kind of obstruction in your way. Excuse my dubbing this kind shallow and flimsy. Is it not absurd to prevent Sri Aurobindo from using the words "I" and "me" and "my" just because he has destroyed his ego and surrendered his self to the Divine? Why should his use of them point to any egoistic motive? All Yogis use personal pronouns for themselves—from the Vedic Rishis down to Ramakrishna. Such using is at times absolutely necessary for intercourse in the world of men. Besides, why do you confine the "I" to the ego? The ego is a particular formation in ignorant Nature; but behind it is the real "I", the individual soul. To ignore the individual soul is to make nonsense of almost every spiritual attainment, for if the attainment is real and not just one more illusion in a world of illusions there must be someone who attains something, someone who gets liberated from mortal bondage, someone who evolves and reaches fulfilment. Surely the ego cannot perform these acts; it is the individual soul which does so. And the individual soul is not, like the ego, the opposite of the universal or a perversion of the transcendental, it can open into them and be united with them, for it is the complement of the former and a delegate of a divine archetype of itself existing in the latter. When Sri Aurobindo speaks

in terms of "I" and "me" and "my", he means the individual soul of him that has become united with its own archetype in the transcendental and embraced its own complement, the universal. A divine triad, with one member of it —namely, the individual soul—as the frontal instrument: that is what Sri Aurobindo the Yogi is. There is nothing egoistic in his employing that frontal instrument. And since the new work he is doing, the work of integral transformation and supramentalisation which none of the past masters had attempted with full consciousness of its possibility,—since this work is carried on by that frontal instrument of his own highest being, it is quite appropriate that he should occasionally employ terms with a colour of individuality in them. Furthermore, who told you that it is the impersonal consciousness of the Eternal that works the transformation of the earth-consciousness? If the impersonal consciousness were the only eternal factor, there would be no personal existence anywhere: personality implies a divine truth of itself which is trying to get manifested in the earth-consciousness: a supreme Personal Consciousness is also an eternal factor and it is this that carries on the transforming process of which Sri Aurobindo speaks and this, whenever a special call for direct utterance is felt, can best utter its messages and its purposes through the incarnate figure of Sri Aurobindo by words like "I" and "me" and "my": there is no incongruity in his saying, "My Integral Yoga". Your notions of individuality and personality strike me as very superficial: individuality and personality are not opposed to self-surrender and self-dedication to the Divine Mother nor are they destroyed by those gestures and acts; nor, I may add, are they incompatible, in the manifold and harmonious truth of the Divine, with a realisation of the impersonal infinite, the impersonal eternal. What is opposed and destroyed is the desire-ridden feverish fragment that is the ego—and the ego also is what is incompatible with the impersonal realisation.

I have tried to clear your mind. I cannot, however, be sure that you will find peace and light by my efforts. Mental aid in spiritual matters can be effective only if you want it to be so or if you are really open to conversion.. There is in our minds a perpetual doubter doubting for doubt's own sake. Don't let him take possession of you under the guise of the genuine spirit of inquiry and the genuine mood of perplexity.

K. D. SETHNA

## *The Future Poetry\**

### THE POETS OF THE DAWN (3)

IF Wordsworth and Byron failed by an excess of the alloy of untransmuted intellect in their work, two other poets of the time, Blake and Coleridge, miss the highest greatness they might otherwise have attained, by an opposite defect, by want of the gravity and enduring substance which force of thought gives to the poetical inspiration. They have the faculty of the revelatory sense to a high degree, but little of the revelatory thought which should go with it; and their sight is only of the middle kind, it is not the highest things they see, but only those of a borderland or middle region. Their poetry has a strange and unique quality and charm, but it stops short of something which would have made it supreme. They are poets of the supernatural and of such spiritual truth as may be shadowed by it or penetrate through it, but not of the greatest truths of the spirit and this supernature remains in them abnormal. It is only when supernature becomes normal to the inner experience that it can be turned into material of the very greatest poetry.

Coleridge more than any of his contemporaries missed the poetic crown; he has only found and left to us three or four scattered jewels of a strange and singular beauty. The rest of his work is a failure. There is a disparateness in his gifts, which prevented him from bringing them together, aiding one with the other and producing great work rich in all the elements of his genius. For instance, the poet in him never took into itself the thinker. The consequence is that very much the greater part of his poetry is unconvincing in the extreme. But there are three poems of his which are unique in English poetry, when an occult eye of dream and vision opened to supraphysical worlds and by a singular felicity the other senses harmonised, the speech caught strange subtleties and coloured lucidities of speech and the ear the melodies of other realms. This is to say that for the first time, except for rare intimations, the middle worlds and their beings have been seen and described with something of reality and no longer in the crude colours of vulgar tradition or in the forms of myth. The Celtic genius of second sight has begun to make its way into poetry. It is by these poems that he lives, though he has also two or three others of a more human charm and grace.

Blake lives ordinarily far up in this middle world of which Coleridge catches some glimpses or at most stands occasionally just over the border. His seeing teems with its images, he hears round him the echoes of its sounds and voices. He is not only a seer, but almost an inhabitant of other planes and other worlds; or at least this subtle second sight is his normal sight. But his power of expression is not equal to his power of vision; he speaks very often of things which are unintelligible symbols to any other intelligence than his own. It is only when he casts into some echo of the language of the luminous children of those shores the songs of their childhood and their innocence, that he becomes limpid to us and sheds upon our earth some clear charm, felicity, wonder of a half-divine elsewhere.

\* A summary of Sri Aurobindo's Future Poetry ("Arya", 1917-1920)

Here again we have something unique, a voice of things which have not been heard before nor has it been heard since. By his effort to put away from him as much as possible the intellectual mind, to see only and sing, and by his singularity and absorption he stands apart solitary and remote and produces only a half effect because he has cut away the link which would help us to reach him and share his illumination.

A greater poet by nature than almost any of these, Shelley was alone of them all very nearly fitted to be a sovereign voice of the new spiritual force that was at the moment attempting to break into poetry and possess there its kingdom. He has on the one hand, one feels, been a native of the heights to which he aspires and the memory of them, not indeed quite distinct, but still environing his imagination with its luminous ethereality, is yet with him. As a poet his intellect is suffused and his imagination bathed in the brilliance of a communion with a higher law, another order of existences, another meaning behind Nature and terrestrial things. But in addition he possesses the intellectual equipment possible in his age and can speak with a subtle beauty and perfect melody the tongue of the poetic intelligence. He is a seer of spiritual realities, much more radiantly near to them than Wordsworth, has, what Coleridge had not, a poetic grasp of metaphysical truths, can see the forms and hear the voices of higher elemental spirits and natural godheads than those seen and heard by Blake, while he has a knowledge too of some fields of the same middle realm, is the singer of a deeper and greater liberty and a purer and nobler revolt than Byron, has the constant feeling of a high spiritual and intellectual beauty, not sensuous in the manner of Keats, but with a hold on the subtler beauty of sensible things which gives us not their glow of vital warmth and close material texture, but their light and life and the rarer atmosphere that environs them on some meeting-line between spirit and body. He is at once seer, poet, thinker, prophet, artist. In his own day and after, the strangeness of his genius made him unintelligible to the rather gross and mundane intellectual mind of the nineteenth century; those who admired him most were seized only by the externalities of his work, but missed its inner significance. Now that we are growing more into the shape of his ideas and the forms of his seeing, we can get nearer to the hidden heart of his poetry. Still high pinnacled as is his flight, great as is his work and his name, there is in him too a limitation which prevents the perfect self-expression that we find only in the few supreme poets.

This was due to the conditions under which the evolution of his poetry had to take place and to the early death which found him at the time when he was rounding towards the fullness of maturity. His early poetry shows his striving with the difficulty of the intellectual manner of speech from which these poets of the supra-intellectual truth had to take their departure. Shelley uses language throughout as a poet, still often it loses itself in a flood of diffuse and over-abundant expression. It is not yet the native language of his spirit. As his power develops, the eloquence remains, but is subdued to the growing splendour of his vision, but the thought seems almost to disappear from the concrete grasp of the intelligence into a wonder of light and a music of marvellous sound. The *Prometheus* and *Epipsychedion* show this turn of his genius at its height. Here he does come near to something like the natural speech of his strange, beautiful and ethereal spirit; but the one thing that is wanting is a more ascetic force of tapasya economising and compressing its powers to bring in a new full and seizing expression of the thought element in his poetry, not merely opulent and

eloquent or bright with the rainbow hues of imagination, but sovereign in poetic perfection and mastery. Towards this need his later style is turning. Only in the lyric of which he has always the secret is he frequently and constantly equal alike in his thought, feeling, imagery, music. But it is not often that he uses the pure lyrical form for his greatest sight, for what would now be called his "message." When he turns to that, he attempts always a larger and more expansive form. The greatness of *Prometheus Unbound* which remains, when all is said, his supreme effort and one of the masterpieces of poetry, arises from the combination of this larger endeavour and profounder substance with the constant use of the lyrical mould in which he most excelled, because it agreed with the most intimate turn of his temperament and subtly exalted spirit.

The spiritual truth which had possession of Shelley's mind was higher than anything opened to the vision of any of his contemporaries, and its power and reality which was the essence of his inspiration can only be grasped, when it is known and lived, by a changed and future humanity. Light, Love, Liberty are the three godheads in whose presence his pure and radiant spirit lived; but a celestial light, a celestial love, a celestial liberty. To bring them down to earth without their losing the celestial lustre and hue is his passionate endeavour, but his wings constantly buoy him upward and cannot beat strongly in an earthlier atmosphere. The effort and the unconquered difficulty are the cause of the ethereality, the want of firm earthly reality that some complain of in his poetry. Yet to bring about the union of the mortal and the immortal, the terrestrial and the celestial is always his passion. He is himself too much at war with his age to ignore its contradictions and pass onward to the reconciliation. He has not the symbols nor the thought-forms through which he can make the spirit of light, love and freedom intimate and near to men. To bring his difficult significance home he lavishes inexhaustibly image on radiant image, line on dazzling beauty of line, the sense floats in a storm of coruscations and dissolving star-showers; the more we look on and accustom our eyes to this new kind of light, the more loveliness and light we see, but there is not that immediate seizing and taking captive of the whole intelligence which is the sign of an assured and sufficient utterance.

He is in revolt too against the law of earth, in arms against its dominions and powers, and would substitute for it by some immediate and magical change the law of heaven; but he fails to make the needed transition and reconciliation and his image of the thing to be remains too ideal, too fine and abstract in spite of the beauty of the poetical forms he gives it as its raiment or atmosphere. Something of the same excess of another light than ours surrounds and veils his intercourse with the spirit of Nature; the genii of the worlds of dream and sleep cluster too thickly round all that his waking eye seizes, "burning through the veil that hides it." Shelley is the bright archangel of this dawn and he becomes greater to us as the light he foresaw and lived in returns and grows, but he sings half concealed in the too dense halo of his own ethereal beauty.

Shelley and Keats, standing side by side, but with a certain antinomy are perhaps the two most purely poetic minds that have used the English tongue. Keats is the first entire artist in word and rhythm in English. Alone of all the chief poets of his time he is in possession of a perfect or almost perfected instrument of his native temperament and genius, but he had not yet found the thing he had to say, not yet seen what he was striving to see. All the other things that interested his great equals, had for him no interest; one godhead only he

worshipped, the image of divine Beauty, and he saw her in three or four forms, sensuous beauty, imaginative beauty, intellectual beauty and ideal beauty. But it is the first only which he had entirely expressed when his thread was cut short in its beginnings; the second he carried far, but it was not yet full-orbed; towards the third and the highest he was only striving, "to philosophise he dared not yet," but it was from the first the real sense and goal of his genius.

On life he had like the others no hold; such work as the *Lamia*, *Isabella*, *Eve of St. Agnes*, in which he followed the romantic tendency of the time, was not his own deeper self-expression; the Odes alone are almost all of them among the scanty number of the chief masterpieces in this high and deliberately lyrical form. But the real soul of Keats, the thing he was striving to bring out of himself is not to be altogether found even here; it lay in that attempt which first failing in *Endymion* was again resumed in *Hyperion*. It was the discovery of the divine Idea, Power and norm of Beauty which by its breath of delight has created the universe, supports it and moves towards a greater perfection. In *Hyperion* the idea is clearer and in bolder relief, but it is misconceived under a too intellectual, external and conventionally epic Miltonic influence. He has found a clue in thought and imagination, but not quite its realisation in the spiritual idea. It is by it and the intimation of it in his work that he belongs in spirit to these prophetic, but half-foiled singers of the dawn. He lives more than any other poet in the very temple of Beauty, traverses its sculptured and frescoed courts with a mind hued and shaped by her forms and colours and prepares, but is never permitted, to enter the inmost sanctuary. The time had not yet come when the spiritual significances could be more than hinted. Therefore Keats and Shelley were taken before their powers could fully expand. All wandered round their centre of inspiration, missed something needed and stopped short or were stopped short. Another age had to arrive which worshipped other and lesser godheads.

### THE VICTORIAN POETS

The Victorian age was one of dominant intellectualism, but it had been an imaginative artistic intellectualism. But still whether we compare it with the inspirations from which it turned or with the inspirations which followed and replaced it, it is a depression, not a height. It is a descent into a comfortable and pretty hollow or a well-cultured flatness between high, wild mountains.

The descent from the uncertain but high elevations of the first romantic, half-spiritual outbreak is very marked. It is a change of levels, a substitution. Keats is substituted by Tennyson, Byron by Browning, Wordsworth by Arnold, Shelley by Swinburne, Blake and Coleridge by Rossetti and Morris. There is a considerable gain but a deep loss; for this poetry has a more evolved richness, but in that greater richness a greater poverty.

It was the work of the middle nineteenth century to prepare anew the intellectual insufficiency of the previous poetry. It was a more conscious, enriched and careful artistic execution, but wanting in height and profundity, with the added misfortune of a reign of rampant philistinism. The Victorian period for all its activity and fruitfulness was by no means one of those great intellectual humanistic ages which the world will look back to with a satisfied sense of clarity or of uplifting. Never was the aesthetic sense so drowned in pretentious ugliness, seldom the intelligence crusted in such an armoured imperviousness to fine and subtle thinking, the ebb of spirituality so far out and low. It was a period of smug commercial middle-

class prosperity, dull mechanism, hard utilitarianism and a shoddy liberalism. Unteachable, it bore with a scornful complacency or bewildered anger or a listening ear of impervious indulgence the criticism of its fine and great spirits.

But this work of revolt and preparation was done chiefly in prose. The poetry of this period suffers by the dull smoke-laden atmosphere in which it flowered; there is a lack in its gifts, in its very accomplishment a sense of something not done. There is certainly much imaginative beauty, much artistic or fine or strong technical execution,—a great deal more in fact of this element than at any previous time,—much excellent work high enough in the second rank, but the inner surge and satisfaction of a free or deep spirit, the strong high-riding pinion or the skyward look, these things are rare in Victorian poetry.

Tennyson, whose fame is now a little dimmed and tarnished by the breath of Time, is unquestionably the representative English poet of his time. He mirrors its ordinary cultivated mind as it shaped in the English temperament and intelligence, with an extraordinary fidelity and in a richly furnished and heavily decorated mirror set round with all the art and device that could be appreciated by the contemporary taste. There is no more consummate master of the language, the turn of phrase almost always hits the mind with a certain, sometimes easy, sometimes elaborate poetic device. It turns always to find and does find the pictorial value of the thing to be described, and even, if such a phrase can be used, the pictorial value of the thought to be seized. The refinement and felicity are not of a kind which call for any unusual receptive power of aesthetic fineness to meet it and feel all its beauty. This art is that of a master craftsman, a goldsmith, a silversmith, who never travels beyond general, well-understood and popular ideas and forms. The spirit is not filled, but the entire aesthetic mind is caught and for a time held captive.

But it is doubtful whether the future will attach to Tennyson's poetry at all near to the value it assumed for the contemporary English mind. When we try to estimate the substance and see what it permanently gives or what new things it discovers for the poetic vision, we find that there is extraordinary little in the end. Tennyson wrote much narrative poetry, but he is not a great narrative poet. *The Idylls of the King* miss both the romantic and the idyllic beauty and arrive only at a graceful decorated effective triviality. There is no congruity between the form and symbol and the feeling and substance. The wearing of the white and scentless flowers of a blameless life in a correct button hole and a tepid sinning without the least tinge of passion or conviction by decorated puppets who are evidently lay-figures of very modern ladies and gentlemen disguised as knights and dames, was hardly a sufficient justification for evoking the magic figures of old legend and romance. There is a void of the true sincerity of poetic vision at the heart of the original conception and no amount of craft and skill in language and descriptive detail and picture can cure that original deficiency.

But some earlier work of the kind had a nobler success. In the *Morte d'Arthur* there is some natural magic and vision which if it had been sustained and kept the same delicate and mystic strain, might have made the cycle of idylls a new poetic revelation. But even in minor successes, like *Lotus-Eaters*, *Ulysses* and *Oenone*, still the form is greater than the substance which has no heights and only occasionally strikes depths. Tennyson does not figure largely as a lyrical poet in spite of one or two inspired and happy moments; for he has neither the lyrical passion and intoxication nor the profounder depth of lyrical feeling. In his description of Nature there is no greater seeing, but a painting of vivid details detached for

simile and ornament. Finally, he gives us a good deal of thinking of a kind in often admirably telling phrase and with much art of setting, but he is not a revealing poetic thinker. His art suffers from the excess of value of form over value of content, a frequent falsetto tone of prettiness, an excessive stress, a colouring which is often too bright for the stuff it hues and is unevenly laid. By his very limitation of mind he becomes the representative poet of a certain side of the English mentality, but to this he brings an artistic decorative quality which is new to English poetry.

Others who have not the same limitations fall below him in art. Swinburne brings into the poetry of the time an element to which the rest are strangers, passion, fire, sublimity and some strains of prophecy. He brings in too many continental notes, but gives them the Anglo-Celtic aggressiveness. He is a great lyrists but revels too much in device and virtuosities in form and his lyrical thought and sentiment turned always towards a chorric ode and dithyramb loses itself too often in a sonorous gurgle and violence of sound. The quieter classical power of Arnold which voices the less confident search of a self-doubting scepticism, has more lucidity, balance and grace, a fine though restricted and tenuous strain of thought and a deep and penetrating melancholy, the mediaevalism and aesthetic mysticism of Rossetti, the slow dreamy narrative of Morris which takes us to a refuge from the blatancy and ugliness of the Victorian environment into the gracious world of old story and legend, bring in each their significance for the age and help towards the enrichment of the language of thought and artistic poetical feeling which is the chief work of this intervening time. They have all three this characteristic that they are studious artists,—it is significant that two of them are painters and decorative craftsmen. Their range is small, but they have brought into English poetry a turn for fine execution which is likely to be a long-abiding influence.

Browning stands apart from the contemporary poets in his striking force and originality. He is in many ways the very opposite of them all. His regard ranges over history and delights in its pictures of the stir and energy of life and its changing scenes, over man and his thought and character and emotion and action, looks into every cranny, follows every tortuous winding, seizes on each leap and start of the human machine. He is a student, critic, psychologist, thinker. His genius is essentially dramatic; for though he has written in many lyrical forms, the lyric is used to represent a moment in the drama of life or character, and though he uses the narrative, his treatment of it is dramatic and not narrative, as when he takes an Italian *fait-divers* and makes each personage relate or discuss it in such a way as to reveal his own motive, character, thought and passion. He does not succeed as a dramatist in the received forms because he is too analytic; but he has an unrivalled force in seizing on a moment of the soul or mind. With all his gifts he might have been the Shakespeare of his time. Power was there and a hold of his material; what was wanting was the essential faculty of artistic form and poetic beauty, so eminent in his contemporaries, a fatal deficiency. This great creator was no artist. He is a consummate technician, one might almost say a mechanician in verse; he had an immense command of language and was never at a lack for forcible and efficient expression, but in its base it was the language of a prosaist and not a poet, of the intellect and not the imagination.

This is the balance of the Victorian epoch; a considerable intellectual and artistic endeavour, contradicting, overcoming but still hampered by an ungenial atmosphere; two remarkable poets held back from the first greatness, one by

imperfection of form, the other by imperfection of substance; four artists of small range, but work of an accomplished, but overpitched or thin and languorous beauty; an enrichment and strengthening of the language capable of greater openings and the creation of an artistic conscience. If the promise of the coming age is fulfilled, it may be remembered as a fine, if limited, period of preparation for the discovery of new, more beautiful and grander fields of poetry.

SISIR KUMAR GHOSH

## *The Teaching of the Gita*

“THE Bhagavad Gita”, says Swami Vivekananda, “is the most authoritative commentary on the Vedas.” It gives us the essence of the old Vedantic knowledge of the Upanishads. The Vedanta, as generally understood, regards this world as an illusion and teaches the renunciation of life and work as a means of escape from this world movement which is full of evil and suffering. The Gita, on the contrary, has given us a practical philosophy of divine living, of turning this present life of suffering humanity into a divine life of peace and light and joy and harmony. It was this aspect of the Gita which was missed or ignored by Acharyas like Shankara. With Shankara this world is a creation of Maya, an eternal principle of inconscience consisting of the three gunas which keep the soul in bondage. But according to the Gita Maya is not the real source of the world, it is only a lower mechanism in the creative movement, it is *aparā prakṛti*; the true power of creation is the Para Prakṛti, which is identical with the Divine; *parā devī śivābhinnā*, as Sri Ramkrishna used to say. The Para Prakṛti, the nature of the supreme Divine, is the power by which He manifests Himself in the world, and everything and every movement in this world is essentially divine, however partial or deformed may be its manifestation at a particular time or place. And God being Sachchidananda, the whole world which is His manifestation can be nothing else in its fundamental nature. To fully manifest this innate Divine in us in this world, *ihaiva*, and in this material body before death, *prāk śariravimokṣaṇāt*...that is the goal of life which the Gita has held before humanity. Shankara and the Mayavadins had to twist and torture considerably the simple and plain slokas of the Gita in order to turn it into a Shastra of *sannyasa* or the renunciation of life\*.

Other Vedantins regard work as the mechanism of bondage; men have to be born again and again in this world of misery in order to reap the good or evil fruits of their work; so the way of escape from life and birth and death is the renunciation of all work. The Gita, on the contrary, regards work as a means of transforming the present nature into the higher divine nature and divine life. That is why the Gita begins with Sri Krishna's severe rebuke to Arjuna who wanted to give up work in order to escape from the sin and misery of the worldly life. The true solution according to the divine Teacher is not to give up work, but to do all works in such a manner as to turn them into a potent means of transformation. The

\* The current commentaries on the Gita are essentially based on Shankara's interpretation.

whole teaching of the Gita turns upon the question how to reconcile work with spirituality, how to make work a means and afterwards an expression of the highest perfection or *siddhi*. The Gita does not make any outward distinction of good or bad work, and does not give any external rule, *vidhi* or *nिषेध*, by which any work is to be judged; all its emphasis is on the spirit, the inner attitude with which the work is to be done so that it may lead to spiritual transformation; and the one thing on which it lays the greatest stress is equality, *samatvam* *yoga ucyate*. If we have to live and work in the world and still have a spiritual life, we must look at all things and all events with an equal eye:

"Equal-visioned everywhere, he sees the Self in all existences and all existences in the Self. He who sees Me everywhere and all and each in Me, is never lost to Me nor I to him. He who has reached oneness and loves Me in all beings, that Yогin, howsoever he lives and acts, is living and acting in Me. O Arjuna, he who sees all equally everywhere as himself, whether it be happiness or suffering, I hold him to be the supreme Yогin." (Gita VI. 29-32)

That is the old Vedantic knowledge of the Upanishads, and it is the superiority of the Gita to other later formulations of it that it turns persistently this knowledge into a great practical philosophy of divine living. As a means of attaining this high spiritual equality, the Gita has enjoined the performance of *niskāma karma*, desireless work. This *niskāma karma* of the Gita is not the so-called disinterested or unselfish work done with philanthropic or patriotic motives, though such work may very well be a preparation for the practice of the Karmayoga of the Gita. The Gita's ideal is to do work without any desire, philanthropic or otherwise; it is not that the work should not have an object or that it should not be done with every care so that the object may be attained; but the object should not be the motive of the work, and we must not be disturbed by the result whether it be success or failure. We should work not with the idea of serving ourselves or anybody else, but only with the idea of serving the Divine through whatever work we may have to do. This desirelessness and equality can be established only with the knowledge that by our work we cannot change even by a hair's breadth the course of the world. "Thou hast a right to action, but only to action, never to its fruits." (II-47). The World-Mother is carrying on the world play which goes on under the presiding control of the Lord, the supreme Divine (IX-10), and nothing can happen in the world which is not willed by her and sanctioned by the Lord. Men are instruments in her hands; but ordinarily they are only blind instruments; it is through their egoism and desire that the Divine "turns them all round and round mounted on a machine." That is the true bondage and the root of all suffering. We have to rise above all egoism and ignorance and make ourselves conscious instruments in the hands of the Divine, *nimitta mātram*.

The Karmayogin may engage in philanthropic works, but he has not the egoistic idea that by his works he can do good to anybody, for he knows that the results of his works, however well-intentioned they may be, are not in his own hands, but in the hands of some higher Power. The only reward which the Karmayogin expects from his work is the purification and transformation of his own nature, and this can result only when the work, whatever it may be, is done with the utmost skill and care, and is offered as a sacrifice to the Divine. And the work one has to do, *kartavyam karma*, is not to be determined by any external rule or social status, but it must be an expression of his own inborn nature, *svabhāva*. "He from whom all beings originate, by whom all this

universe is pervaded, by worshipping Him by his own work, a man reacheth perfection." (XVIII-46)

By *siddhi* or perfection the Gita means the attainment of *sādharmya* or the likeness of nature with the Divine; we have to rise above our present life in the three gunas of *aparā prakṛti* and be established in the peace, light, power, harmony and joy of *parā prakṛti*, the Lord's own nature, *svam prakṛtim*. This realisation and the highest perfection does not come at once. It is only when the Divine Himself takes up our *sādhanā* and fills us with His Light and Power and Ananda that the supreme transformation can be realised. At first we have to work following our *svabhāva* and *svadharma* and practise *karmayoga* which at its highest becomes one with *jñanayoga* and *bhaktiyoga*. But the last step is to give up all *dharma*s and put ourselves entirely into the hands of the Divine in an integral self-surrender. That is the supreme secret of the teaching of the Gita. "Abandon all dharmas and take refuge in Me alone. I will deliver thee from all sin and evil, do not grieve." (XVIII-66). The Divine Master of the Yoga, *yogesvara Kṛṣṇa*, will then himself take up our yoga and raise us to our utmost possible perfection, the light and splendour of a divine and infinite nature.

ANILBARAN ROY

*It is not a fact that the Gita gives the whole base of Sri Aurobindo's message; for the Gita seems to admit the cessation of birth in the world as the ultimate aim or at least the ultimate culmination of Yoga; it does not bring forward the idea of spiritual evolution or the idea of the higher planes and the supramental Truth-Consciousness and the bringing down of that consciousness as the means of the complete transformation of earthly life.*

*The idea of the Supermind, the Truth-Consciousness is there in the Rig Veda according to Sri Aurobindo's interpretation and in one or two passages of the Upanishads, but in the Upanishads it is there only in seed in the conception of the being of knowledge, Vijnanamaya Purusha, exceeding the mental, vital and physical being; in the Rig Veda the idea is there but in principle only, it is not developed and even the principle of it has disappeared from the Hindu tradition.*

*It is these things among others that constitute the novelty of Sri Aurobindo's message as compared with the Hindu tradition,—the idea that the world is not either a creation of Maya or only a play, lila, of the Divine, or a cycle of births in the ignorance from which we have to escape, but a field of manifestation in which there is a progressive evolution of the soul and the nature in Matter and from Matter through Life and Mind to what is beyond Mind till it reaches the complete revelation of Sachchidananda in life. It is this that is the basis of the yoga and gives a new sense to life. (From a forthcoming book in French on Sri Aurobindo by Gabriel M. Herzen.)*

## Reviews

**Thus Spake Vivekanda.** Sri Ramkrishna Math. Mylapore, Madras.  
Price 8 as.

A personal reminiscence. A young man in prison, accused of conspiracy and waging war against the British Empire. If convicted he might have to suffer the extreme penalty, at least, transportation to the Andamans. The case is dragging on for long months. And the young man is in a solitary cell. He cannot always keep up his spirits high. Moments of sadness and gloom and despair come and almost overwhelm him. Who was there to console and cheer him up? Vivekananda. Vivekananda's speeches, "From Colombo to Almora", came, as a godsend, into the hands of the young man. Invariably when the period of despondency came he used to open the book, read a few pages, read them over again, and the cloud was there no longer. Instead there was hope and courage and faith and future and light and air.

Such is Vivekananda, the embodiment of Fearlessness—*abhīh*, the Upaniṣadic word, the *mantra*, he was so fond of. The life and vision of Vivekananda can be indeed summed up in the mighty phrase of the Upanishads, *Nāyam ātmā balahinena labhyāḥ*, 'This soul no weakling can attain'. Strength! More strength! Strength ever more! One remembers the motto of Danton, the famous leader in the French Revolution: "De l'audace, encore de l'audace, toujours de l'audace!"

The gospel of strength that Vivekananda spread was very characteristic of the man. For it is not mere physical or nervous bravery, although that too is indispensable, and it is something more than moral courage. In the speeches referred to, the subject matter (as well as the manner to a large extent) is philosophical, metaphysical, even abstract in outlook and treatment: they are not a call to arms, like the French National Anthem, for example; they are not merely an ethical exhortation, a moral lesson either. They speak of the inner spirit, the divine in man, the supreme realities that lie beyond. And yet the words are permeated through and through with a vibration life-giving and heroic—not so much in the explicit and apparent meaning as in the style and manner and atmosphere: it is catching, even or precisely when he refers, for example, to these passages in the Vedas and the Upanishads, magnificent in their poetic beauty, sublime in their spiritual truth, *nec plus ultra*, one can say, in the grand style supreme:

*Yasyaite himavanto mahitvā*

He whose greatness these snowy ranges declare

or, *Na tatra sūryo bhāti na candra tārakam....,*

There the sun shines not, nor the moon nor the stars

or again,

*Nāśad āśit no sad āśit tadānīm  
nāśit rājo no vyoma paro yat ...*

"Then existence was not nor non-existence, the mid-world was not nor the Ether nor what is beyond."

The consciousness that breathed out these mighty words, these heavenly sounds was in itself mighty and heavenly and it is that that touches you, penetrates you, vibrates in you a kindred chord, "awakening in you someone dead" till then—*mṛtam kañcana bodhayanti*. More than the matter, the thing that was said, was the personality, the being who embodied the truth expressed, the living consciousness behind the words and the speech that set fire to your soul. Indeed it was the soul that Vivekananda could awaken and stir in you. Any orator, any speaker with some kind of belief, even if it is for the moment, in what he says, by the sheer force of assertion, can convince your mind and draw your acquiescence and adhesion. A leader of men, self-confident and bold and fiery, can carry you off your feet and make you do brave things. But that is a lower degree of character and nature, ephemeral and superficial, that is touched in you thereby. The spiritual leader, the Guide, goes straight to the spirit in you—it is the call of the deep unto the deep. That was what Vivekananda meant when he said that Brahman is asleep in you, awaken it, you are the Brahman, awaken it, you are free and almighty. It is the spirit consciousness—Sachchidananda—that is the real man in you and that is supremely mighty and invincible and free absolutely. The courage and fearlessness that Vivekananda gave you was the natural attribute of the lordship of your spiritual reality. Vivekananda spoke and roused the Atman in man.

Vivekananda spoke to the atman in man, he spoke to the atman of the world, and he spoke specially to the atman of India. India had a large place in Vivekananda's consciousness: for the future of humanity and the world is wedded to India's future. India has a great mission, it has a spiritual, rather *the* spiritual work to do. Here is India's work as Vivekananda conceived it in a nut-shell:

"Shall India die? Then from the world all spirituality will be extinct." And wherefore is this call for the life spiritual? Thus the aspiring soul would answer: "If I do not find bliss in the life of the spirit, shall I seek satisfaction in the life of the senses? If I cannot get nectar, shall I fall back upon ditch water?"

The answer is as old as that of Nachiketas: "These horses and these songs and dances of yours, let them remain yours, man is not appeased with riches"; or that of Maitreyi, "What am I to do with that which will not bring me immortality?" This is then man's mission upon earth:

"Man is higher than all animals, than all angels: none is greater than man. Even the Devas will have to come down again and attain to salvation through a human body. Man alone attains to perfection, not even the Devas." Indeed men are gods upon earth, come down here below to perfect themselves and perfect the world—only they have to be conscious of themselves. They do not know what they are, they have to be actually and sovereignly what they are really and potentially. This then is the life-work of everyone:

"First, let us be Gods, and then help others to be Gods. 'Be and make', let this be our motto."

That is indeed the only way of securing a harmonious and perfected humanity:

"Manifest the divinity within you, and everything will be harmoniously arranged around it."

The path to this higher harmonious divine life is that of hard labour, of scrupulously untiring, conscientious work:

"It is struggle against nature and not conformity to nature that makes man what he is."

## THE ADVENT

Work and not abstention from work is the way, but not work for ignorant enjoyment:

"The dwelling-place of the Jivatman, this body, is a veritable means of work, and he who converts this into an infernal den is guilty, and he who neglects it is also to blame."

"No work is petty"...."He who can properly prepare a *chilam* (pipe) of tobacco can also properly meditate".

These are luminous life-giving mantras and the world and humanity of today, sore distressed and utterly confounded, have great need of them to live them by and be saved.

We warmly welcome the neat little volume containing such utterances, beautifully selected and arranged, that can go into the pockets of the million and be the talisman of their salvation and redemption.

N. G.

**Famine or Plenty.** By villager. Published by Sahityika, Calcutta.  
Price Rs. 5.

It has often been asserted that the Bengal famine of 1942-43, which took away about 20 lacs of people, and which seems to have already receded to the background on account of even more poignant events of recent happening, was a man-made one. It is now realised, though not always clearly admitted, that that calamity could have been averted if the Government had taken prompt measures and if the people had co-operated with the Government when the latter was hard pressed by the exigencies of a world war and the imminent threat of invasion on the Eastern borders of India. In the last year there was again a threat of famine even on a wider scale than the previous one, but though it has been averted by timely measures taken by the Government and the ready help given by grain-exporting countries, it cost 75 crores of rupees to India to buy food grains in the markets of the world. It has now become urgent that India must grow all the food she requires, for she cannot go on making imports like that for the simple reason that she has not the means to do so. By a close study, extending over twenty-five years, of the conditions under which cultivators in many parts of India exist, the author of the book under review is convinced that the spectre of famine could be banished from the land for ever. "The process would be long, arduous and difficult, but by no means impossible, given the necessary study of the many factors involved, courage, vision and above all, human understanding in full measure." The author, a Scotsman who prefers to pass as an humble "villager", has considered in this book the various factors involved, comparing them with conditions in other lands; it is packed with information and inspiring guidance. A special feature of the book is the warning given about the dangers of intensive cultivation to which the authorities seem to be committed.

Our author insists that public opinion must never be allowed to forget the tragedy that was enacted in Bengal in 1943 unless and until action has been taken to make a recurrence impossible. So in the introductory chapter he gives a short poignant account of the calamity illustrating it with pictures with which the world became familiar in those days and which immediately brought help to stricken Bengal from all parts of India and even outside. If we take the dictionary meaning of famine as general scarcity of food, dearth, want of provisions, destitution, India can be said to suffer from famine every year, in fact every month

of the year. The extreme poverty of India can only be remedied by industrial development, and rightly attention has been focussed on it; but when India is setting on the path of rapid industrialisation, it is better to be reminded of the evils of industrialism which have been revealed in other industrially advanced countries. As our author points out, the most important, single premise of the industrial revolution and all it implies is maximum production at minimum cost. In other words, articles, whether factory-produced or products of the soil, must be produced as cheaply as possible, so that money-profits may accumulate. The aid of Science was invoked to cheapen production from soil with what disastrous results, the author has illustrated from prevailing agricultural conditions in the United States as well as in South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Science promulgated a theory, which was accepted with acclamation by agriculturists committed to maximum production at minimum cost, that if you found out by analysis what amount of nitrogen, phosphorus, or other components a particular crop had extracted from the soil and replaced that component by its equivalent, you readjusted the balance in the soil and could with impunity grow a similar crop in the following year. Hence came the use of chemical fertilisers, and the whole world is now taking to them. Science, as our author aptly observes, forgot that the soil is alive and is not composed of lifeless mineral ingredients only. If you took the known mineral ingredients of the human body and fed a person only on those ingredients in the form of synthetic chemicals, the person would not continue to live. The result of the extensive use of chemical fertilisers has been that many fertile lands in America have already become deserts. "Accumulating living soil at the rate of something like one inch in five hundred years, Nature built up the prairie. As the United States developed, commercial farming spread westwards. First, the prairie was extensively over-grazed by cattle; (meat, too, found a ready-cash market when it could be produced cheaply by over-grazing). Then, in more recent years, large crops of wheat have been taken off the same soil year after year. In the process of growing from a seed to a fully matured plant, wheat extracts from the soil certain elements. These elements are different from the elements extracted by, say, the paddy plant, soya bean plant, the tomato plant, or the potato. If wheat is grown on the same soil every year then it must follow, as sure as the sun comes up in the East and sets in the West, that the productivity of the soil would deteriorate. The heavy crops taken off the prairie lands year by year were made possible only by increasing quantities of chemical fertilisers. But as the quantities of chemical fertilisers increased, so the humus content of the soil decreased. Humus, it will be remembered, has defied science to produce an exact chemical formula for it. The soil bacteria and the earth-worms, the main manufacturers of humus, left the prairie soil in exact relationship to the quantities of chemical fertilisers poured in. Deprived of its humus manufacturers, who are also its aerating agencies, the soil developed a hard crust. Because of its inability to absorb moisture as before, soil erosion and disintegration started. High winds came along; the now much-dreaded "dust storms" were created; as much as one inch of top soil was lost in a single year (which Nature with so much patience had taken five hundred years to prepare). The prairie, in many places, is now in a fair way to becoming desert."

Chemical fertilisers are not alone responsible. But the very important point for India to appreciate is that chemical fertilisers are symbolic of the unnatural methods of agriculture which have created these conditions in America. It is interesting to note here that the farmer in Great Britain gave up rotation farming,

and instead of growing a fodder crop fed his milching cows largely on concentrates. By so doing he increased the quantity of milk. The result is that while thirty years ago, the average dairy cow in England could be expected to yield milk up to eight or nine lactations, now, by overstraining the milk-producing organs through the feeding of concentrates, the average cow in dairy herds in England cannot produce milk beyond two or three lactations. If the process continues, says our author, it will require a few more years before the average cow in the dairy herds of England will be sterile.

Another thing that science has introduced into agriculture as a method of cheap production is ploughing by tractors. Indeed the reputed success of collective farming in Russia is due chiefly to the use of tractors, and the communists in India are holding up the same prospect before our agriculturists. The author's opinion on this important matter is worth quoting: "Ploughing by tractor divorces the agriculturist from touch with the soil. He sits on top of the tractor, driving a mechanical contrivance, whereas he formerly followed his plough on foot, guiding the depths of the plough, many times unconsciously, higher or lower, as his innate sympathy with the soil he was ploughing, demanded....The plough behind the tractor, on the other hand, is fixed at a certain depth. It cannot be adjusted frequently to changing conditions along the furrows. Another factor is the actual weight of the tractor itself, which tends to counteract the lifting power of the plough. The plough, therefore, fails to turn over the soil so completely as it otherwise would do. The results of these two factors is to gradually create most favourable conditions for that arch-enemy of the farmer, soil-erosion. Russia is no exception. There can be no doubt that soil-erosion there has been greatly accelerated by large-scale mechanical cultivation, introduced to assist collective farming. There are vast areas in Russia with low rainfall and high winds. Old-fashioned horse-ploughing, to a certain extent, counteracted the soil-erosion that inevitably follows low rainfall and high winds unless adequate protection and precaution are provided. The substitution of tractor ploughing has taken away the protection given by horse-ploughing. Chemical fertilisers have been poured in to complete the process. Some competent observers now believe that Russia must be well on the way to competing with America for the record in the speed with which soils are being blown away, deserts being formed."

The author does not note that if tractors are used in great numbers in India, a very serious problem would arise about the maintenance of the oxen. At present bulls are used all over the country for agricultural purposes; with the introduction of tractors their occupation will be gone. In other countries this problem does not arise as beef is extensively used as food. In India a vast majority of the people do not eat beef. The bovine race has to be preserved as we cannot dispense with the milk of cows. But in the natural course an equal number of she-calves and male calves will be born; what is to be done with the latter, as only a few bulls will be sufficient for breeding purposes? As a matter of fact, now the she-buffaloes are kept alive for their milk and the he-buffaloes, as they are not very useful for agricultural purposes, are generally put to death by the most painful process of slow starvation, even by the Hindus who are votaries of non-violence. If tractors are introduced, the same thing will have to be done with the bulls and oxen also.

The author has briefly dealt with all the aspects of agriculture in India. He has shown how the survey of world conditions holds positive pointers. Australia, for instance, has demonstrated how cattle and sheep can be improved by correct breeding. New Zealand has demonstrated how the health of boys fed on fruits

and vegetables grown on soils treated by properly prepared compost very quickly resulted in decided improvement. Lincolnshire in England demonstrates the beneficial effects of compost manuring on potato crops that were rapidly deteriorating through harmful methods of agriculture. We shall here deal with two items which he specially recommends to the Indian farmer, compost making and rotation farming. Manure is prepared in India, if there is any preparation at all, in a most haphazard manner. To our author compost-making is an art. Thus he writes about compost: "To understand fertilization properly it is necessary to remember that we do not feed the growing plant when we apply fertilizers. We feed the soil. Soil is alive, just as human beings, plants and animals are alive. Compost attempts to give back to the soil everything that has been extracted from it, in a form most acceptable and most beneficial to the soil. The vital functions of the soil are by nature maintained through humus-developing activities, bacteria, earth worms, roots that break up the soil. Chemical fertilizers, not being an organic process, cannot adapt themselves in these natural organic processes... Most traditional methods of dealing with farmyard manure in India are objectionable. Here it may be sufficient to point out the objection to one common method, that of depositing fresh farmyard manure in pits. The base of the pit, being some distance below ground level, is hard; so are the sides. This prevents rain which falls on the pit from filtering away. The rain first soaks the base of the manure-heap in the pit, then, when more rain comes, liquidity rises gradually up the pile. This prevents proper fermentation. When the manure is extracted from the pit and put on the ground it very often is still much the same structurally, so far as bacterial activity is concerned, as it was when originally deposited in the pit. Compost, on the other hand, is full of bacteria and humus. Compost can be composed of everything that will disintegrate into humus through a process of fermentation, not a process of putrefaction, such as takes place when leaves are broken into leaf mould in pits from which air and water are excluded by heavy earth covering. Village sweepings of every description composed of organic substances are invaluable for the making of compost. So are all types of plant refuse, straw, chaff, kitchen garbages, egg-shells, fish-skins, road scrapings, ditch cleanings, wood ashes, slaughterhouse refuse, horn, hoof and bone meal and, last but not least, farmyard manure. There are many ways of setting up a compost heap. The ideal to aim at is to combine as nearly as possible all the different components as and when they become available. This can best be done by having several small heaps rather than a single very large one. First it is necessary to dig a shallow pit, to give a firm foundation. The pit should not be too deep, not more than twelve inches. A convenient size for working is not more than ten feet broad, perhaps fifteen or twenty feet long. On the bottom of the pit it is helpful in the fermentation process to put a thin layer of cow-dung, or, if available, already fermented compost from an old heap. Drainage must be thorough. The structure of the heap as it grows up should be firm though moist, but not wet. Having got the pit prepared with a thin layer of manure or compost on the bottom, everything that becomes available in the form of compost-making materials should be deposited every day. It is surprising how quickly the heap grows, once the habit is formed of depositing in the heap everything that will break down into compost. When the heap is about twelve inches high, a thin covering of earth should be applied. The covering should not be so heavy as to prevent air from penetrating to the heap, air being essential in the fermentation process. Then more compost-making materials are added daily with a thin earth-covering being applied each twelve

inches. As the heap grows, there frequently is in India a tendency towards over-dryness. This can be counteracted, with very beneficial results to the heap, by daily application of cow-urine and the water in which rice has been cooked. Both of these liquids supply very valuable ingredients to the fermentation process. At about six feet high, the heap should be given its final covering of earth, still so thin that air may penetrate. After about a month or so, the heap should be turned, the material in the inside being put on the outside and the material at the top being put to the bottom. If fermentation has been satisfactory, it will be found that the heap contains numerous earth worms and, to the expert eye, bacteriological activities will be discerned. A sure sign of success is fungoid growth becoming visible. The heap is then covered up again, and care taken to maintain it at the correct consistency neither too damp nor too dry. Where quicklime is available, a little of it is beneficial.... Such cow-dung as can be spared should be added to the compost heap. There it will definitely assist in the making of an incomparably better fertilizer than it is by itself. A correct farming policy in India, of course, would aim at creating conditions under which the agriculturists would have fuel other than cow-dung. After another month or so, the compost heap is again turned; if fermentation has been successful, after still another month, it is probably ready to apply to the ground as fertilizer."

The author has failed to mention one thing which is extremely valuable as manure, viz., human excreta. In no other country this valuable material is so much wasted as it is in India. China would not have been able to support her vast millions if she had not taken particular care to utilise human excreta as manure, and India will not be able to feed her growing population unless she also puts all her human excreta into the soil as manure. Men take most food from the soil and return the least, and that is a violation of the law of sacrifice and interchange which the Gita describes as the universal law by which all creatures can prosper in the world. "With sacrifice the Lord of creatures of old created creatures and said: By this shall you bring forth, let this be your milker of desires."

It is nothing short of theft to take the food out of the soil and not to pay for it in the form of returned excreta, and Nature will never forgive that sin. Of course there is the prejudice against handling night soil and excreta. In ancient India there was, as we learn from the Mahabharata, the same prejudice against the use of cowdung. Then our thinkers prepared myths instilling into the minds of the masses the purity and even spiritual virtues of cowdung; the age of myths is gone, but people now listen to the message of science, and it is hoped the Indian cultivators can be induced to follow their Chinese and Japanese brethren in this all-important matter of providing food for the teeming millions of India. In cities big factories can be set up to turn the sewage into excellent manure, as is being done in other countries and even in some provinces of India. In Calcutta however the whole sewage is still being carried by canals into the Ganges which takes it all into the bosom of the Bay of Bengal, while the people of Bengal continue to suffer from chronic famine. Steps must immediately be taken to stop this huge wastage. As it is, the enormous sewage material of Calcutta, instead of replenishing the impoverished soil of Bengal, is turning into hell the villages through which it is being carried by the canals. In villages, where more than seventy percent of the population live, the excreta can be turned into manure by simple methods. After the harvest is taken away, the cultivators should dig small holes all over the field, not more than one foot deep, and the villagers

should be asked to pass motions in these holes and cover them with a thin layer of earth which will be lying by the side of the hole. Within a few days, it will turn into earth which will be good manure. As it is, villagers pass motions anywhere and everywhere thereby making the villages foul and unhealthy. Septic latrines also can be introduced in villages, and the changed excreta can be conveniently handled as manure.

The next thing to which the author gives great importance is rotation farming. "Broadly, the object of a crop rotation is to spread the different crops over a period of years in such a way that what is removed by one crop can be replaced by natural processes during the growing of another crop or by allowing land to lie fallow for one or two years during the period of rotation. Fundamentally, rotation farming arises from a conception that the farm and all that lives thereon,—human, animal, plant life,—forms a biological unit, a living organism, a part of that far greater microcosm that is the universe. Obviously, such a conception breaks down immediately when we attempt to apply it to the miserable two or three acres that at present constitute the Bengal cultivator's average holding. But that does not prevent us from attempting to fit that miserable little holding into a greater conception, controlled, or rather directed by a village Panchayet. This could be done by asking the Panchayet to chalk out a rotation programme for, say, one thousand acres and giving to the owner of each small area the right to share in the results of that rotation farming provided he allows his own little piece of land to be included in the rotation. An illustration of what happens when the balance of all forms of life maintained on the soil is upset by wrong methods of agriculture, can be found in famine which, on this conception, is Nature's attempt to adjust the balance by killing off the surplus people and animals."

As a proof that the proposals and suggestions given in this book are not too idealistic, but eminently practicable, the author cites in an appendix the very interesting account of what has been achieved in Gosaba. Gosaba is an island in the Sundarbans. Up to 1903 it was completely covered with jungles. At spring tides, twice monthly, salt water seeped in from the sea inundating all but the highest points in the island. Tigers, crocodiles, jungle animals of numerous species abounded. The only human visitors were wood-cutters, collectors of honey at certain seasons, a few shikaris who conducted tiger hunts from time to time. No human beings lived permanently on the island. None could have existed. In 1903 Mr. Daniel Hamilton, a Scotsman in business in Calcutta, took a lease of Gosaba from the Government of Bengal. Today, upward of 20,000 people live on Gosaba in conditions so incomparably better than the conditions under which cultivators elsewhere in Bengal live in that our author finds it difficult to describe the difference. As an indication of the obstacles that had to be overcome at the beginning the author mentions the fact that no drinking water could be found in the island. Water, water everywhere but not a drop to drink. Until distilling plant was installed even drinking water had to be brought from outside. Mr. Hamilton was determined to overcome all difficulties and obstacles and his resolution ultimately triumphed.

The nature of agricultural indebtedness in Bengal and how it can be remedied is well illustrated by a typical case mentioned in the appendix. Some years before coming to Gosaba, Arjuna, an excellent cultivator, had borrowed Rs. 50 from a Mahajan. Something, he could not remember how many rupees, had been paid annually towards interest, but the debt continued to grow and the position in 1911 was that he had given to the money-lender a registered bond for Rs 500 over his and

his son's 70 bighas of land in Gosaba. The terms of the bond were that Arjuna would cultivate the 75 bighas at his own expense and give to the money-lender half the paddy produced as interest for one year on his original loan of Rs 50. Surely a revealing example of the power of money over cultivators in India. Indeed a retired judge recently gave the opinion that money-lenders should be abolished by law, for no amount of legislation can protect the cultivators from the clutches of the money-lenders. Arjuna approached Mr. Hamilton for help in the matter. Mr. Hamilton redeemed the bond by paying the full amount of Rs 500. He arranged to take Rs 120 annually from Arjuna. From this 12½% per annum was taken as interest, the balance went towards repayment of the principal. Arjuna was able to satisfy Mr. Donald by surrendering one-eighth part of his crop instead of the half formerly surrendered to the money-lender. Arjuna finally liquidated his debt in the sixth year.

That is the way of redeeming all agricultural debt in the country. The money-lenders should be paid in cash by the Government to the extent of, say, one-fourth only of their claim on the debtors, and the Government should realise that amount from the debtors in the manner adopted by Mr. Hamilton. This procedure was adopted with unique success in the Bhavnagar state in Western India.

Mr. Daniel established co-operative societies to finance the cultivators. He established co-operative agencies for the selling of paddy and a co-operative rice mill where members' paddy is milled. There is a Co-operative Bhandar where essential articles such as cloth, mustard oil, kerosine etc. can be had. All these activities are flourishing and are living tributes to what can be done by and through co-operative efforts when properly directed. But Mr. Daniel's most interesting experiment and probably the most successful was neither the abolition of rapacious money-lenders nor in the field of co-operation. It was a reversion to the old traditional method of relying on panchayets. He gave direction that disputes of whatever nature should be referred to the Committee of Management of the Co-operative Society of the village concerned. The procedure has proved a complete success. As a direct result of having such an excellent system, Gosaba is in the unique position of being able to dispense with policemen. There are none in the island.

This excellent book ought to be translated in all Indian vernaculars and widely circulated through cheap editions.

A. B.

Vol. IV. No. 2

April 1947



The **ADVENT**

The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda.

*Sri Aurobindo.*

## Communism—What does it mean?

COMMUNISM, in India at least, has come to mean things which it was not the original or the main purpose of the word to imply. Communism meant "holding in common", that is to say, there is no private property, one can claim nothing as exclusively as one's own—things are distributed, work as well as necessities, and one receives them, each in his turn, according to his need and desert, as determined by a general planning. Let alone property, there are types of communism that speak of holding in common women and children even. In any case whatever one is given one possesses and enjoys only for the moment, there is nothing like permanent possession. All have equal right to all things. This is an ideal which I do not think many would care to adopt and follow. In India it appears the word "communism" has been taken in the sense of the regime of the common man. Not that there is any harm in this deviation of the meaning. If it is a convenient label or a battle-cry for the common man's right to exist, to have his just *lebensraum*, well, none can object and all should sympathise and help towards that end. But the mischief is that the common man adopted by communism has a restrictive denotation, it takes in only a section of the common man: it is used mostly, if not exclusively, in connection with wage-earners and that too only of the category of peasants and workmen. A large section of the common man, even of wage-earners in a sense, is left out in the communistic scheme, at least not given the same importance as the other. School teachers, especially primary school teachers, small office-clerks, for example, are not less "common" or less unfortunate or worthy of succour. These form a genuine proletariat: only they have not yet been called upon to take part in the Dictatorship.

Apart from this restrictive denotation, communism, in practice, has been given a restrictive connotation too which is more ominous and unhelpful. The communistic movement has become dynamic in so far as it is a movement for redressing grievances (although the methods employed at times, it is alleged, are not as they should be, worthy of the civilised human being), in other words, it has been more or less negative in its work and outlook. The whole stress has been laid upon two items: (1) less hours of work and (2) more wages—I do not mention better housing, medical aid, pension etc., which are auxiliary items. When workers were considered as no more than slaves under the yoke of the blind and brutal exploiter, these demands had a meaning; but they have lost much of their point in the changed circumstances of today.

Whatever the immediate necessity of such drastic negative procedures, true and abiding social welfare depends upon a deeper and wider planning. The aim should be not merely to look for grievances and deal with them piecemeal, but to create conditions in which such grievances do not arise at all or are reduced to a minimum. For the economic well-being of the society, a just and equitable distribution of wealth is a sound policy, no doubt, but before that one must have wealth and enough of it. The stress should therefore be upon increased production, "grow-more-food". The workers must consider themselves ministers to the Goddess Lakshmi. To bring prosperity to the commonwealth, to discover and marshall the resources, increase the output and thus help to raise the standard of life—that is the true role of loyal workers. But as it is, in the way they behave and act at present, they are consumers more than producers. To concentrate all attention and energy upon solely decreasing the hours of work and increasing the wages can have no other meaning. Leisure, rest, recreation are necessary, but that should not mean laziness, unwillingness to work, dissipation. One should be decently paid for one's labour, one must not be overworked, yes, but one must look to the other side also, one must bear in mind the capacity of the payer and the needs of the others in the society. Necessity is one thing, greed or selfishness is another. The greed to possess all the golden eggs at once sometimes leads to a disastrous procedure.

The farmer proprietor, the bourgeois, the capitalist in a modern society, whatever charges of exploitation may be brought against them, are, each in his own way, precisely centres of production, of wealth increment. They are not merely and not always blood-suckers and heartless profiteers. One need not rob, burn, kill them in a mad rush; they too can be utilised, their services placed at the disposal of the commonwealth. These are names which we may not like because of unhappy associations in the past, but the realities, the types of forces they represent are, many of them, permanent

features of Nature's economy. They come up in other forms and names. They have suppressed bourgeois bureaucracy in Russia, but it has reappeared in what is termed nowadays the managerial system.

Be that as it may. If one demands a fair share of the riches of the commonwealth, one must lend one's hand honestly and whole-heartedly to its production. That is the line of true communism. Above all, one must cultivate the civic sense, the very primary thing one must have for a harmoniously prosperous collective life—we have to learn again the first lessons of civilised living in these days when the brute and the vampire are seated in human hearts. We must not always clamour for selfish gains, gains for oneself, for one's class or community, or even for one's country. We must have a global view of the human society which is a complex and multifoliate organism. Many interests have to be served, many lines of growth have to be encouraged, liberty for contraries, all in the frame of a wide harmony. The ancient Rishis invoked the aid of the gods Mitra and Varuna for the establishment of that wide harmony, the builders of the new age too can do no better.

### *To be or not to be*

A moral problem, *un cas de conscience* (a case of conscience), as they say in French. To defend yourself against your attacker and kill him who comes to kill you or stand disarmed and let yourself be killed—which is better, which has the greater moral value? To fight your enemy is normal, is human. To preserve yourself, that is to say, your body, is the very first injunction of Nature. That is Nature's primary and fundamental demand. And to preserve one's life one has to take other's life. That is also Nature. But then, it is said, man is meant to rise above Nature, live (even if it means to die) according to a higher law—not the biological law, the law of tooth and claw. The higher law is for the preservation of life indeed, but others' life, not one's own, if it comes to that; it is not self-centred, but wholly other-regarding, it is for harmony, for peace and amity, not violence and battle. If one demurs and points out that it requires two to be friends and at peace, the answer is that one side must begin, and the merit goes to him who begins. One need not worry about the other side, which may be left to follow its own law of life, which, however, can be gained over only in this way and not by compulsion or coercion or violence. *Na hi verena verani samantidha kudachana. Never by enmity is enmity appeased*, says the Dhammapada.

This is a way of cutting the Gordian knot. But the problem is not so simple as the moralist would have it. Resist not evil: if it is made an absolute rule, would not the whole world be filled with evil? Evil grows much faster

Apart from this restrictive denotation, communism, in practice, has been given a restrictive connotation too which is more ominous and unhelpful. The communistic movement has become dynamic in so far as it is a movement for redressing grievances (although the methods employed at times, it is alleged, are not as they should be, worthy of the civilised human being), in other words, it has been more or less negative in its work and outlook. The whole stress has been laid upon two items: (1) less hours of work and (2) more wages—I do not mention better housing, medical aid, pension etc., which are auxiliary items. When workers were considered as no more than slaves under the yoke of the blind and brutal exploiter, these demands had a meaning; but they have lost much of their point in the changed circumstances of today.

Whatever the immediate necessity of such drastic negative procedures, true and abiding social welfare depends upon a deeper and wider planning. The aim should be not merely to look for grievances and deal with them piecemeal, but to create conditions in which such grievances do not arise at all or are reduced to a minimum. For the economic well-being of the society, a just and equitable distribution of wealth is a sound policy, no doubt, but before that one must have wealth and enough of it. The stress should therefore be upon increased production, "grow-more-food". The workers must consider themselves ministers to the Goddess Lakshmi. To bring prosperity to the commonwealth, to discover and marshall the resources, increase the output and thus help to raise the standard of life—that is the true role of loyal workers. But as it is, in the way they behave and act at present, they are consumers more than producers. To concentrate all attention and energy upon solely decreasing the hours of work and increasing the wages can have no other meaning. Leisure, rest, recreation are necessary, but that should not mean laziness, unwillingness to work, dissipation. One should be decently paid for one's labour, one must not be overworked, yes, but one must look to the other side also, one must bear in mind the capacity of the payer and the needs of the others in the society. Necessity is one thing, greed or selfishness is another. The greed to possess all the golden eggs at once sometimes leads to a disastrous procedure.

The farmer proprietor, the bourgeois, the capitalist in a modern society, whatever charges of exploitation may be brought against them, are, each in his own way, precisely centres of production, of wealth increment. They are not merely and not always blood-suckers and heartless profiteers. One need not rob, burn, kill them in a mad rush; they too can be utilised, their services placed at the disposal of the commonwealth. These are names which we may not like because of unhappy associations in the past, but the realities, the types of forces they represent are, many of them, permanent

features of Nature's economy. They come up in other forms and names. They have suppressed bourgeois bureaucracy in Russia, but it has reappeared in what is termed nowadays the managerial system.

Be that as it may. If one demands a fair share of the riches of the commonwealth, one must lend one's hand honestly and whole-heartedly to its production. That is the line of true communism. Above all, one must cultivate the civic sense, the very primary thing one must have for a harmoniously prosperous collective life—we have to learn again the first lessons of civilised living in these days when the brute and the vampire are seated in human hearts. We must not always clamour for selfish gains, gains for oneself, for one's class or community, or even for one's country. We must have a global view of the human society which is a complex and multifoliate organism. Many interests have to be served, many lines of growth have to be encouraged, liberty for contraries, all in the frame of a wide harmony. The ancient Rishis invoked the aid of the gods Mitra and Varuna for the establishment of that wide harmony, the builders of the new age too can do no better.

### *To be or not to be*

A moral problem, *un cas de conscience* (a case of conscience), as they say in French. To defend yourself against your attacker and kill him who comes to kill you or stand disarmed and let yourself be killed—which is better, which has the greater moral value? To fight your enemy is normal, is human. To preserve yourself, that is to say, your body, is the very first injunction of Nature. That is Nature's primary and fundamental demand. And to preserve one's life one has to take other's life. That is also Nature. But then, it is said, man is meant to rise above Nature, live (even if it means to die) according to a higher law—not the biological law, the law of tooth and claw. The higher law is for the preservation of life indeed, but others' life, not one's own, if it comes to that; it is not self-centred, but wholly other-regarding, it is for harmony, for peace and amity, not violence and battle. If one demurs and points out that it requires two to be friends and at peace, the answer is that one side must begin, and the merit goes to him who begins. One need not worry about the other side, which may be left to follow its own law of life, which, however, can be gained over only in this way and not by compulsion or coercion or violence. *Na hi verena verani samantidha kudachana. Never by enmity is enmity appeased, says the Dhammapada.*

This is a way of cutting the Gordian knot. But the problem is not so simple as the moralist would have it. Resist not evil: if it is made an absolute rule, would not the whole world be filled with evil? Evil grows much faster

than good. By not resisting evil one risks to perpetuate the very thing that one fears and deprives the good of its chance to approach or get a foothold. That is why the Divine Teacher declares in the Gita that God comes down upon earth, assuming a human body, to protect the good and slay the wicked, slay not metaphorically, but actually and materially, as he did on the field of the Kurus.

It is a complex problem and the solution too is complex. The Gita—and Hinduism generally—does not posit a universal *dharma*, but a hierarchy of dharmas. Men have different natures; so their duties, their functions and activities, their paths of growth and development must naturally be different. A rigid rule does not fit in with the facts of life, and the more absolute it is, the less efficacy it possesses as a living reality. Therefore in the Indian social scheme, there is one dharma for the Brahmin and another for the Kshatriya (a third for the Vaishya and a fourth for the Sudra).

The Brahmin is he who represents in his nature and character the principle and movement of knowledge, of comprehension and inclusion, of peace and harmony—all the qualities that are termed *sattvic*. A Brahmin does not fight, the very build of his consciousness prevents him from wounding and hurting; he has no enemy, even if he is attacked or killed he does not raise his arm to protect himself (although Ramakrishna would prescribe even for him a modified or mollified mode of resisting the evil, hissing at least if not biting). The Biblical injunction, we know, is to present the other cheek too to the smiter. This is for those who follow the Brahminical discipline. But a Kshatriya, who in his nature and consciousness is a warrior, has another dharma; he is the armed guard of knowledge and truth, he is strength and force. He has to resist the evil in the name of the Lord, he has to raise his arm to strike. He is the instrument of Rudra and Mahakali. Does not the mighty goddess declare—"I draw the bow for Rudra, I hurl the arrow to slay the hater of the truth"? If the Kshatriya does not follow his own dharma, but seeks to imitate the Brahmin, he brings about a confusion, liable to disintegrate the society, he is then un-Aryan, inglorious, unworthy of heaven, deserving all the epithets which Sri Krishna heaped upon the dejected, depressed and confused Arjuna. So long as the world is held by brute force, so long as there is the sway of evil power over the material earth and the physical body, there will be the need to resist it physically; if I do not do it, other instruments will be found. I may say like Arjuna, overwhelmed with pity and grief, "I shall not fight", but God and the cosmic deities may refuse my refusal and compel me to do what in my ignorance and wrong-headedness I would not like to do.

Here lies the secret and the solution of the problem. It is indeed the solution given for all ages by the Gita. There will always be a problem, a difficult decision to make—a division in the consciousness—so long as one

is in the realm of dualities, in one's mental being and consciousness, ruled by relativities and contingencies. There one cannot but have a divided loyalty. A part of you, for example, is loyal to your family, another to your country, a third to yourself or to some ideal which you have set up. And naturally man feels confused in the midst of their conflicting claims and is at a loss to choose. Therefore the Gita says, the highest law, the supreme code of conduct is the Divine Will. And the only work and labour for man is to discover and identify oneself with this Divine Will. "Abandon all other standards of conduct, take refuge in Me alone." That is the supreme secret of human life—as well as of the Life Divine.

To know the divine will and to be one with it is not easy, to be sure. But that is the only radical solution. That has got to be done, if one is to come out of the chaos he is in.

Once in this status of the divine consciousness, one passes beyond the three Gunas. That is to say, one bids good-bye to one's (the human sense of) freedom and option of choice. One can say no longer, I cannot do it, for it seems immoral, I have to do that, because that seems good. One goes beyond good and bad and awaits the divine command. One does what one is ordered to do from above, what is needed to fulfil the Cosmic Purpose. You do not act then, it is the Divine who acts in you.

It may be asked if even then there are not some types of activity and impulsion that are intrinsically evil, undivine—they can under no circumstances be godly or God's instruments, they have to be rejected, cast aside in the very beginning, also in the middle and naturally in the end. But it must be remembered that the human mind cannot be the judge of what is divine or undivine, there are things the Divine may sanction which the mental being fights shy of. It must leave it to the Divine to choose His instrument and His mode of activity—it is sufficient if the mental being knows by whom it is impelled and where it falls as an arrow shot to its mark: *keneshitam patati preshitam*.

Yes, there is one thing intrinsically evil and undivine and that has to be rejected and cast aside ruthlessly—that is nothing else than the egoistic consciousness. It is this that has passions and prejudices, likes and dislikes, ideas and ideals, formations of its own, other deities installed in place of the Divine Truth and Reality. The ego goes indeed and with it also those rhythms and stresses, lines and shades germane to it that bar the free flow of the Supreme Breath. But the instrument remains and the arms and the weapons—they are cleansed and sanctified: instead of the Asura wielding them, it is now the gods, the Divine Himself who possess and use them.

*"Savitri"*

A guardian of the unconsoled abyss  
 Inheriting the long agony of the globe,  
 A stone-still figure of high and godlike Pain  
 Stared into space with fixed regardless eyes  
 That saw grief's timeless depths but not life's goal.  
 Afflicted by his harsh divinity,  
 Bound to his throne, he waited unappeased  
 The daily oblation of her unwept tears.

BOOK I, CANTO I.

The deepest and the most fundamental mystery of the human consciousness (and in fact of the earth consciousness) is not that there is an unregenerate aboriginal being there as its bed-rock, a being made of the very stuff of ignorance and unconsciousness and inertia that is Matter: it is this that the submerged being is not merely dead matter, but a concentrated, a solidified flame, as it were, a suppressed aspiration that burns inwardly, all the more violent because it is not articulate and in the open. The aboriginal is that which harbours in its womb the original being. That is the Inconscient Godhead, the Divinity in pain—*Mater Dolorosa*—the Divine Being who lost himself totally when transmuted into Matter and yet is harrassed always by the oestrus of a secret flame driving it to know itself, to find itself, to be itself again. It is Rudra, the Energy coiled up in Matter and forging ahead towards a progressive evolution in light and consciousness. That is what Savitri, the universal Divine Grace become material and human, finds at the core of her being, the field and centre of a concentrated struggle, a millennial aspiration petrified, a grief of ages congealed, a divinity lone and benumbed in a trance. This divinity has to awake and labour. The god has to be cruel to himself for his divinity demands that he must surpass himself, he cannot abdicate, let Nature go her own way, the inferior path of ease and escape. The godhead must exercise its full authority, exert all its pressure upon itself—*tapas taptva*—and by this heat of incubation release the energy that leads towards the light and the high fulfilment. In the meanwhile the task is not easy. The divine sweetness and solicitude lights upon this hardened divinity: but the inertia of the Inconscient, the 'Pani' hides still the light within its rocky cave and would not deliver it. The Divine Grace, mellow with all the tears of love and sympathy and tenderness she has gathered for the labouring godhead, has pity for the hard lot of a humanity stone-bound to the material life, yet yearning and surging towards freedom. The godhead is not consoled or appeased until that freedom is achieved and

light and immortality released. The Grace is working slowly, laboriously perhaps but surely to that end: the stone will wear down and melt one day. Is that fateful day come?

That is the meaning of human life, the significance of even the very ordinary human life. It is the field of a "dire debate", "a fierce question", a constant struggle between the two opposing or rather polar forces, the will of aspiration "to be" and the will of inertia "not to be"—the friction to use a Vedic image, of the two batons of the holy sacrificial wood, *arani*, out of which the flame is to leap forth. (The pain and suffering men are subject to in this unhappy vale of tears—physical illness and incapacity, vital frustration or mental confusion—are symbols and expressions of a deeper fundamental Pain. That pain is the pain of labour, the travail for the birth and incarnation of a godhead asleep or dead. Indeed, the sufferings and ills of life are themselves powerful instruments. They inevitably lead to the Bliss, they are the fuel that kindle, quicken and increase the Fire of Ecstasy that is to blaze up on the day of victory in the full and integral spiritual consciousness. The round of ordinary life is not vain or meaningless: its petty innocent-looking moments and events are the steps of the marching Divinity. Even the commonest life is the holy sacrificial rite progressing, through the oblations of our experiences bitter or sweet, towards the revelation and establishment of the immortal godhead in man.)

The *Divine Solitude* is with you (—you are getting all the help you need). But keep up your *aspiration*, remain *faithful* and the *wrong movement will be changed into the right movement*—so that the *victorious Love* may manifest.

*Divine solicitude* is supporting you in the *disinterested work* through which you will attain *transformation*.

By *loving consecration* and *faithful service* allow the *Divine protection* to be with you in your *aspiring concentration* for *integral transformation*.

THE MOTHER

# SAVITRI

## BOOK THREE, CANTO THREE

### THE HOUSE OF THE SPIRIT AND THE NEW CREATION

A MIGHTIER task remained than all he had done.  
To that he turned from which all being comes,  
A sign attending from the Secrecy  
Which knows the Truth ungrasped behind our thoughts  
And guards the world with its all-seeing gaze.  
In the unapproachable stillness of his soul,  
Intense, one-pointed, monumental, lone  
Patient he sat like an incarnate hope  
Motionless on a pedestal of prayer.  
A Strength he sought that was not yet on earth,  
Help from a Power too great for mortal will,  
The Light of a Truth now only seen afar,  
A sanction from his high omnipotent Source.  
But from the appalling heights there stooped no voice;  
The timeless lids were closed; no opening came.  
A neutral helpless void oppressed the years.  
In the texture of our bound humanity  
He felt the stark resistance huge and dumb  
Of our inconscient and unseeing base,  
The stubborn mute rejection in Life's depths,  
The ignorant No in the origin of things.  
A veiled collaboration with the Night  
Even in himself survived and hid from his view:  
Still something in his earthly being kept  
Its kinship with the Inconscient whence it came.  
A shadowy unity with a vanished past  
Treasured in an old world-frame was lurking there,  
Secret, unnoted by the illumined mind,  
And in subconscious whispers and in dream

Still murmured at the mind and spirit's choice.  
Its treacherous elements spread like slippery grains  
Hoping the incoming Truth might stumble and fall,  
And old ideal voices wandering moaned  
And pleaded for a heavenly leniency  
To the gracious imperfections of our earth  
And the sweeter weaknesses of our mortal state.  
This now he willed to discover and exile.  
All Nature's recondite spaces were stripped bare,  
All her dim crypts and corners searched with fire  
Where refugee instincts and unshaped revolts  
Could shelter find in darkness' sanctuary  
Against the white purity of heaven's cleansing flame.  
All seemed to have perished that was undivine:  
Yet some minutest dissident might escape  
And still a centre lurk of the blind force.  
For the Inconscient too is infinite;  
The more its abysses we insist to sound,  
The more it stretches, stretches endlessly.  
Then lest a human cry should spoil the Truth  
He plucked desire up from its bleeding roots  
And offered to the gods the vacant place.  
Thus could he bear the touch immaculate.  
A last and mightiest transformation came.  
His soul was all in front like a great sea  
Flooding the mind and body with its waves;  
His being, spread to embrace the universe,  
United the within and the without  
To make of life a cosmic harmony,  
An empire of the immanent Divine.  
In this tremendous universality  
Not only his soul-nature and mind-sense  
Included every soul and mind in his,  
But even the life of flesh and nerve was changed  
And grew one flesh and nerve with all that lives;  
He felt the joy of others as his joy,  
He bore the grief of others as his grief;  
His universal sympathy sustained,  
Immense like ocean, the creation's load  
As earth bears all the experience of the race,  
Yet thrilled with a transcendent joy and peace.  
There was no more division's endless scroll;

The Spirit's secret unity was won,  
His nature felt again the single bliss;  
There was no cleavage between soul and soul,  
There was no barrier between world and God.  
Overpowered were form and memory's limiting line;  
The covering mind was seized and torn apart;  
It was dissolved and now no more could be,  
The one Consciousness that made the world was there;  
All now was luminosity and force.  
Abolished in its last thin fainting trace  
The circle of the little self was gone;  
A separate being could no more be felt;  
It disappeared and knew itself no more,  
Lost in the Spirit's wide identity.  
His nature was a movement of the All,  
Exploring itself to find that all was He,  
His soul a delegation of the All  
That turned from itself to join the one Supreme.  
Transcended was the human formula;  
Man's heart that had obscured the Inviolable  
Assumed the mighty beating of a god's;  
His seeking mind ceased in the Truth that knows;  
His life was a flow of the universal life.  
On the world's highest line he stood fulfilled  
Awaiting the ascent beyond the world,  
Awaiting the Descent the world to save.  
A Splendour and a Symbol wrapped the earth,  
Serene epiphanies looked and hallowed vasts  
Surrounded, wise infinitudes were close  
And bright remotenesses leaned near and kin.  
Sense failed in that tremendous lucency;  
Ephemeral voices from his hearing fell  
And Thought potent no more sank large and pale  
Like a tired god into mysterious seas.  
The robes of mortal thinking were cast down  
Leaving his knowledge bare to Absolute's sight;  
Fate's driving ceased and Nature's sleepless spur:  
The athlete heavings of the will were stilled  
In an omnipotent and unmoving peace.  
Life in his members lay down vast and mute;  
Naked, unwalled, unterrified it bore  
The immense regard of Immortality.

The last movement died and all at once grew still.  
A weight that was the unseen Transcendent's hand  
Laid on his limbs the spirit's measureless seal,  
Infinity swallowed him into shoreless trance.

As one who sets his sail towards mysteried shores  
Driven through huge oceans by the breath of God,  
The fathomless below, the unknown around,  
His soul abandoned the blind star-field, Space.  
Afar from all that makes the measured world,  
Plunging to hidden eternities it withdrew  
Back from mind's foaming surface to the Vasts  
Voiceless within us in omniscient sleep.  
Above the imperfect reach of word and thought,  
Beyond the sight, the last support of form,  
Lost in deep tracts of superconscious Light,  
Or voyaging in blank featureless Nothingness,  
Or sole in the trackless Incommensurable,  
Exceeding self and not-self and selflessness,  
He reached at last his sempiternal base.  
On sorrowless heights no winging cry disturbs  
Pure and untouched above the mortal play  
Is spread the spirit's hushed immobile air.  
There no beginning is and there no end;  
There is the stable force of all that moves;  
There the aeonic labourer is at rest.  
There is no keyed creation to be watched  
And there no fate-turned huge machinery;  
The marriage of evil with good within one breast,  
The clash of strife in the very clasp of love,  
The dangerous pain of life's experiment  
In the values of Inconsequence and Chance,  
The peril of mind's gamble, throwing the soul  
As stake, with the lights and shadows of the idea  
And equal measures of the true and false  
In that immobile and immutable realm  
Find no approach, no cause, no claim to live:  
There only reigns the Spirit's motionless power  
And its omniscient and omnipotent peace.  
There can no conflict rise of thought with thought,  
Of truth with truth, of right with rival right;  
No trouble comes from a half-seeing world,

No suffering of hearts compelled to beat  
In bodies of the inert Inconscient's make.  
Armed with the immune occult unsinking Fire  
The guardians of Eternity keep its law  
For ever fixed upon Truth's giant base  
In her magnificent and timeless home.  
There Nature on her dumb spiritual couch  
Immutably transcendent knows her source  
And to the stir of multitudinous worlds  
Assents unmoved in a perpetual calm.  
All-causing, all-sustaining and aloof,  
The Witness looks from his unshaken poise,  
An Eye immense regarding all things done.  
Apart, at peace above creation's stir,  
Immersed in the eternal altitudes,  
He abode defended in his shoreless self,  
Companied only by the all-seeing One.  
A Mind too mighty to be bound by Thought,  
A Life too boundless for the play in space,  
A Soul without borders unconvinced of Time,  
He felt the extinction of the world's long pain,  
He became the unborn Self that never dies,  
He joined the sessions of Infinity.  
On the cosmic murmur primal loneliness fell,  
Annulled was the contact formed with time-born things,  
Empty grew Nature's wide community.  
All things were brought back to their formless seed,  
The world was silent for a cyclic hour.  
Although the afflicted Nature he has left  
Maintained beneath him her broad numberless fields,  
Her enormous act, receding, failed remote  
As if a soulless dream at last had ceased.  
No voice came down from the high silences,  
None answered from her desolate solitudes.  
A stillness of cessation reigned, the wide  
Immortal hush before the gods were born;  
A universal Force awaited, mute,  
The veiled Transcendent's ultimate decree.

Then suddenly there came a downward look  
As if a sea exploring its own depths;  
A living Oneness widened at its core

And joined him to unnumbered multitudes.  
A Bliss, a Light, a Power, a flame-white Love  
Caught all into a sole immense embrace;  
Existence found its truth on Oneness' breast  
And each became the self and space of all.  
The great world-rhythms were heart-beats of one Soul;  
To feel was a flame-discovery of God,  
All mind was a single harp of many strings,  
All Life a song of many meeting lives;  
For worlds were many, but the Self was one.  
This knowledge was now made a cosmos' seed:  
This seed was cased in the safety of the Light,  
It needed not a sheath of Ignorance.  
Then from the trance of that tremendous clasp  
And from the throbings of that single Heart  
And from the naked Spirit's victory  
A new and marvellous creation rose.  
Incalculably the outflowing infinitudes  
Lived their innumerable unity;  
Worlds where the being is unbound and wide  
Bodied unthinkable the egoless Self,  
Rapture of beatific energies  
Joined Time to the Timeless, poles of a single joy;  
White vasts were seen where all is wrapped in all.  
There were no contraries, no sundered parts,  
All by spiritual links were joined to all  
And bound indissolubly to the One:  
Each was unique but took all lives as its own,  
And, following out these tones of the Infinite,  
Recognised in himself the universe.  
A splendid centre of infinity's whirl  
Pushed to its zenith's height, its last expanse,  
Felt the divinity of its own self-joy  
Repeated in its numberless other selves.  
It took up tirelessly into its scope  
Persons and figures of the Impersonal,  
As if prolonging in a celestial count,  
In a rapturous multiplication's sum,  
The recurring decimals of eternity.  
None was apart, none lived for himself alone,  
Each lived for God in him and God in all,  
Each soleness inexpressibly held the whole.

## THE ADVENT

72

There Oneness was not tied to monotone;  
It showed a thousand aspects of itself,  
Its luminous immutable stability  
Upbore on a changeless ground for ever safe,  
Compelled to a spontaneous servitude,  
The ever-changing incalculable steps,  
The seeming-reckless dance's subtle plan  
Of immense world-forces in their perfect play.  
Appearance looking back to its hidden truth,  
It made of all fractions secret integers;  
It turned all struggle to a sweet strife of love  
In the harmonised circle of its sure embrace.  
Identity's reconciling happiness gave  
A rich security to difference.  
On a meeting line of hazardous extremes  
The Game of games was played to its breaking point,  
Where through self-finding by divine self-loss  
There leaps out unity's supreme delight  
Whose blissful undivided sweetness feels  
A commonalty of the Absolute.  
There was no sob of suffering anywhere;  
Experience ran from point to point of joy:  
Bliss was the pure undying truth of things.  
All nature was a conscious front of God:  
A wisdom worked in all, self-moved, self-sure,  
A plenitude of illimitable Light,  
An authenticity of intuitive Truth,  
A glory and passion of creative Force.  
Infallible, leaping from eternity,  
The moment's thought inspired the passing act,  
A word, a laughter sprang from Silence' breast,  
A rhythm of Beauty in the calm of Space,  
A Knowledge in the fathomless heart of Time.  
All turned to all without reserve's recoil:  
A single ecstasy without a break,  
Love was a close and thrilled identity  
In the throbbing heart of all that luminous life.  
A universal vision that unites,  
A sympathy of nerve replying to nerve,  
Hearing that listens to thought's inner sound  
And follows the rhythmic meanings of the heart,  
A touch that needs not hands to feel, to clasp,

Were there the native means of consciousness  
And heightened the intimacy of soul with soul.  
A grand orchestra of spiritual powers,  
A diapason of soul interchange  
Harmonised a oneness deep, immeasurable.  
In these new worlds projected he became  
A portion of the universal gaze,  
A station of the all-inhabiting light,  
A ripple on a single sea of peace.  
His mind answered to countless communing minds,  
His words were syllables of the cosmos' speech,  
His life a field of the vast cosmic stir.  
He felt the footsteps of a million wills  
Moving in unison to a single goal.  
A stream ever new-born that never dies,  
Caught in its thousandfold current's ravishing flow,  
With its eddies of immortal sweetness thrilled,  
He bore coiling through his members as they passed  
Calm movements of interminable delight,  
The bliss of a myriad myriads who are one.

A lucent hierarchy of planes was seen  
Enfeoffed to this highest kingdom of God-state.  
Attuning to its law their own right rule  
Each was the fullness of a glad degree,  
Alone in beauty, perfect in itself,  
Married to all in happy difference.  
Each gave its powers to help its neighbours' parts,  
But suffered no diminution by the gift;  
Profiteers of a mystic interchange,  
They grew by what they took and what they gave,  
Feeling the rest as their own complements,  
One in the might and joy of multitude.  
Even in the poise where Oneness draws apart  
To feel the rapture of its separate selves,  
The Sole in its solitude yearned towards the All  
And the Many turned to look back at the One.  
An all-revealing all-creating Bliss,  
Seeking for forms that manifest truths divine,  
Aligned in their significant mystery  
The gleams of the symbols of the Ineffable  
Blazoned like hues upon a colourless air

On the white purity of the Witness Soul.  
These hues were the very prism of the Supreme,  
His beauty, power, delight creation's cause.  
A vast Truth-Consciousness took up these signs  
To pass them on to some divine child Heart  
That looked on them with laughter and delight  
And joyed in these transcendent images  
Living and real as the truths they house.  
The Spirit's white neutrality became  
A playground of miracles, a rendezvous  
For the secret powers of a mystic Timelessness  
That, pouring through Time its works of ageless might,  
Unveiled as if a luring rapturous face  
The wonder and beauty of its Love and Force.  
The eternal Goddess moved in her cosmic house  
Sporting with God as a Mother with her child:  
To him the universe was her bosom of love,  
His toys were the immortal verities.  
All here self-lost had there its divine place.  
The Powers that here betray our hearts and err,  
Were there sovereign in truth, perfect in joy,  
Masters in a creation without flaw,  
Possessors of their own infinitude.  
There Mind, a splendid sum of vision's rays,  
Shaped substance by the glory of its thoughts  
And moved amidst the grandeur of its dreams.  
Imagination's great ensorcelling rod  
Summoned the unknown and gave to it a home,  
Outspread luxuriantly in golden air  
Truth's iris-coloured wings of fantasy,  
Or she sang to the intuitive heart of joy  
Wonder's dream-notes that bring the Real close.  
The Power that makes the unknowable near and true,  
In the temple of the ideal shined the One:  
It peopled thought and mind and happy sense  
With the virgin forms through which the Formless shines,  
The words that usher divine experience  
And the Ideas that crowd the Infinite.  
There was no gulf between the thought and fact;  
Ever they replied like bird to calling bird;  
The will obeyed the thought, the act the will,  
There was a harmony woven twixt soul and soul.

A marriage with eternity divinised Time.  
There Life pursued unwearied of her sport,  
Joy in her heart and laughter on her lips,  
The bright adventure of God's game of chance.  
In her ingenious ardour of caprice,  
In her transfiguring mirth she mapped on Time  
A fascinating puzzle of events,  
Lured at each turn by new vicissitudes  
To self-discovery that could never cease.  
Ever she framed stark bonds for the will to break,  
Brought new creations for the thought's surprise  
And passionate ventures for the heart to dare,  
Where Truth recurred with an unexpected face  
Or else repeated old familiar joy  
Like the return of a delightful rhyme.  
At hide and seek on a Mother-Wisdom's breast,  
An artist teeming with her world-idea,  
She never could exhaust its numberless thoughts.  
Untired of sameness and untired of change,  
Endlessly she unrolled her moving act,  
A mystery drama of divine delight,  
A living poem of world ecstasy,  
A kakemono of significant forms,  
A coiled perspective of developing scenes,  
A brilliant chase of self-revealing shapes,  
An ardent hunt of soul looking for soul,  
A seeking and a finding as of gods.  
There Matter is the Spirit's firm density,  
An artistry of glad outwardness of self,  
A treasure-house of lasting images  
Where sense can build a world of pure delight:  
The home of a perpetual happiness,  
It lodged the hours as in a pleasant inn.  
The senses there were outlets of the soul;  
Even the youngest child-thought of the mind  
Incarnated some touch of highest things.  
There substance was a resonant harp of self,  
A net for the constant lightnings of the Spirit,  
A magnet power of love's intensity  
Whose yearning throb and adoration's cry  
Drew God's approaches close, sweet, wonderful.  
Its solidity was a mass of heavenly make;

Its fixity and sweet permanence of charm  
 Made a bright pedestal for felicity.  
 Its bodies woven by a divine sense  
 Prolonged the nearness of soul's clasp with soul;  
 Its warm play of external sight and touch  
 Reflected the heart-contact's glow and thrill,  
 The pleasure of the mind, the spirit's joy;  
 Life's rapture kept its never-fading bliss.  
 All that now passes lived immortal there  
 In the proud beauty and fine harmony  
 Of Matter plastic to spiritual light.  
 Its ordered hours proclaimed the eternal Law;  
 Vision reposed on a safety of deathless forms:  
 Time was Eternity's transparent robe.  
 An architect hewing out self's living rock,  
 Phenomenon built Reality's summer-house  
 On the beaches of the sea of Infinity.

Against this glory of spiritual states,  
 Their parallels and yet their opposites  
 Floated and swayed, eclipsed and shadow-like  
 As if a doubt made substance, flickering, pale,  
 This other scheme two vast negations found.  
 A world that feels not its inhabiting Self,  
 Labours to find its cause and need to be;  
 A Self left ignorant of the world it made  
 Struggles to emerge, to be free, to know and reign;  
 Yet their convergent lines met not at all.  
 Three Powers governed its irrational course,  
 In the beginning an unknowing Force,  
 In the middle an embodied striving soul,  
 In its end a silent spirit denying life.  
 A dull and infelicitous interlude  
 Unrolls its dubious truth to a questioning Mind  
 Compelled by an ignorant Power to play its part  
 And to record her inconclusive tale,  
 The mystery of her inconscient plan  
 And the riddle of a being born from Night  
 By a marriage of Necessity with Chance.  
 This darkness hides a nobler destiny.  
 A chrysalis of a great and glorious truth,  
 It stifles the winged marvel in its sheath

Lest from the prison of Matter it escape  
And, wasting its beauty on the formless Vast,  
Merge into the Unknowable's mystery,  
Leaving unfulfilled the world's miraculous fate.  
As yet thought only some high spirit's dream  
Or a vexed illusion in man's toiling mind,  
A new creation from the old shall rise:  
A Knowledge inarticulate find speech,  
Beauty suppressed burst into paradise bloom,  
Pleasure and pain dive into absolute bliss.  
A tongueless oracle shall speak at last,  
The Superconscious conscious grow on earth,  
The Eternal's wonders join the dance of Time.  
But now all seemed a vainly teeming vast  
Upheld by a deluded Energy  
To a spectator self absorbed and mute,  
Careless of the unmeaning show he watched,  
Regarding the bizarre procession pass  
Like one who waits for an expected end.  
He saw a world that is from a world to be.  
There he divined rather than saw or felt,  
Far off upon the rim of consciousness,  
Transient and frail this little whirling globe  
And on it left like a lost dream's vain mould,  
A fragile copy of the spirit's shell,  
His body gathered into mystic sleep.  
A foreign shape it seemed, a mythic shade.

Alien now seemed that dim far universe,  
Self and eternity alone were true.  
Then memory climbed to him from the striving planes  
Bringing a cry from once-loved cherished things,  
And to the cry as to its own lost call  
A ray replied from the occult Supreme.  
For even there the boundless Oneness dwells.  
As if to itself unrecognisable,  
It lives sunk down as into tenebrous seas,  
Upholding the world's inconscient unity  
Hidden in Matter's insentient multitude.  
A seed-self sown in the Indeterminate,  
It forfeits its glory of divinity;  
Concealed is the omnipotence of its Force,

## THE ADVENT

Concealed is the omniscience of its Soul;  
An agent of its own transcendent Will,  
It merges its knowledge in unconsciousness;  
Accepting error, sorrow, death and pain,  
It pays the ransom of the ignorant Night,  
Redeeming by its substance Nature's fall.  
Himself he knew and why his soul had gone  
Into earth's passionate obscurity  
To share the labour of an errant Power  
Which by division hopes to find the One.  
Two beings he was, one wide and free above,  
One struggling, bound, intense, its portion here.  
A tie between them still could bridge two worlds;  
There was a dim response, a distant breath;  
All had not ceased in the unbounded hush.  
His heart lay somewhere conscious and alone  
Far down below him like a lamp in night;  
Abandoned it lay, alone, imperishable,  
Immobile with excess of passionate will,  
His living, sacrificed and offered heart  
Absorbed in adoration mystical,  
Turned to its far-off fount of light and love.  
In the luminous stillness of its mute appeal  
It looked up to the heights it could not see;  
It yearned from the longing depths it could not leave.  
In the centre of its vast and fateful trance  
Half way between his free and fallen selves,  
Interceding twixt God's day and the mortal's night,  
Accepting worship as its single law,  
Accepting bliss as the sole cause of things,  
Refusing the austere joy which none can share,  
Refusing the calm that lives for calm alone,  
To her it turned for whom it willed to be.  
In the passion of its solitary dream  
It lay like a closed soundless oratory  
Where sleeps a consecrated argent floor  
Lit by a single and untrembling ray  
And an invisible Presence kneels in prayer.  
On some deep breast of liberating peace  
All else was satisfied with quietude;  
This only knew there was a truth beyond.  
All other parts were dumb in centred sleep

Consenting to the slow deliberate Power  
Which tolerates the world's error and its grief,  
Consenting to the cosmic long delay,  
Timelessly waiting through the patient years  
Her coming they had asked for earth and men;  
This was the fiery point that called her now.  
Extinction could not quench that lonely fire;  
Its seeing filled the blank of mind and will;  
Thought dead, its changeless force remained and grew.  
Armed with the intuition of a bliss  
To which some moved tranquillity was the key,  
It persevered through life's huge emptiness  
Amid the blank denials of the world.  
It sent its voiceless prayer to the Unknown;  
It listened for the footsteps of its hopes  
Returning through the void immensities,  
It waited for the fiat of the Word  
That comes through the still self from the Supreme.

END OF CANTO THREE

*Sri Aurobindo*

## *Equality and the Annihilation of Ego\**

A N entire self-consecration, a complete equality, an unsparing effacement of the ego, a transforming deliverance of the nature from its ignorant modes of action are the steps by which the surrender of all the being and nature to the Divine Will can be prepared and achieved,—a self-giving true, total and without reserve. The first necessity is an entire spirit of self-consecration in our works; it must become first the constant will, then the ingrained need in all the being, finally its automatic but living and conscious habit, the self-existent turn to do all action as a sacrifice to the Supreme and to the veiled Power present in us and in all beings and in all the workings of the universe. Life is the altar of this sacrifice, works are our offering; a transcendent and universal Power and Presence as yet rather felt or glimpsed than known or seen by us is the Deity to whom they are offered. This sacrifice, this self-consecration has two sides to it; there is the work itself and there is the spirit in which it is done, the spirit of worship to the Master of Works in all that we see, think and experience.

The work itself is at first determined by the best light we can command in our ignorance. It is that which we conceive as the thing that should be done. And whether it be shaped by our sense of duty, by our feeling for our fellow-creatures, by our idea of what is for the good of others or the good of the world or by the direction of one whom we accept as a human Master, wiser than ourselves and for us the representative of that Lord of all works in whom we believe but whom we do not yet know, the principle is the same. The essential of the sacrifice of works must be there and the essential is the surrender of all desire for the fruit of our works, the renunciation of all attachment to the result for which yet we labour. For so long as we work with attachment to the result, the sacrifice is offered not to the Divine, but to our ego. We may think otherwise, but we are deceiving ourselves; we are making our idea of the Divine, our sense of duty, our feeling for our fellow-creatures, our idea of what is good for the world or others, even our obedience to the Master a mask for our egoistic satisfactions and preferences and a specious shield against the demand made on us to root all desire out of our nature.

At this stage of the Yoga and even throughout the Yoga this form of desire, this figure of the ego is the enemy against whom we have to be always on our guard with an unsleeping vigilance. We need not be discouraged

---

\* The Synthesis of Yoga, Chapter IX (Revised Version)

when we find him lurking within us and assuming all sorts of disguises, but we should be vigilant to detect him in all his masks and inexorable in expelling his influence. The illumining Word of this movement is the decisive line of the Gita, "To action thou hast a right but never under any circumstances to its fruit." The fruit belongs solely to the Lord of all works; our only business with it is to prepare the success by a true and careful action and to offer it, if it comes, to the divine Master. Afterwards even as we have renounced attachment to the fruit, we must renounce attachment to the work; at any moment we must be prepared to change one work, one course or one field of action for another or abandon all works if that is the clear command of the Master. Otherwise we do the act not for his sake but for our satisfaction and pleasure in the work, from the kinetic nature's need of action or for the fulfilment of our propensities; but these are all stations and refuges of the ego. However necessary for our ordinary motion of life, they have to be abandoned in the growth of the spiritual consciousness and replaced by divine counterparts: an Ananda, an impersonal and God-directed delight, will cast out or supplant the unillumined vital satisfaction and pleasure, a joyful driving of the Divine Energy, the kinetic need; the fulfilment of the propensities will no longer be an object or a necessity, there will be instead the fulfilment of the Divine Will through the natural dynamic truth in action of a free soul and a luminous nature. In the end, as the attachment to the fruit of the work and to the work itself has been excised from the heart, so also the last clinging attachment to the idea and sense of ourselves as the doer has to be relinquished; the divine Shakti must be known and felt above and within us as the true and sole worker.

★ ★ ★

The renunciation of attachment to the work and its fruit is the beginning of a wide movement towards an absolute equality in the mind and soul which must become all-enveloping if we are to be perfect in the spirit. For the worship of the Master of works demands a clear recognition and glad acknowledgement of Him in ourselves, in all things and in all happenings. Equality is the sign of this adoration; it is the soul's ground on which true sacrifice and worship can be done. The Lord is there equally in all beings; we have to make no essential distinctions between ourselves and others, the wise and the ignorant, friend and enemy, man and animal, the saint and the sinner. We must hate none, despise none, be repelled by none; for in all we have to see the One disguised or manifested at his pleasure. He is a little revealed in one or more revealed in another or concealed and wholly distorted in others according to His will and His knowledge of what is best for

that which He intends to become in form in them and to do in works in their nature. All is our self, one self that has taken many shapes. Hatred and dislike and scorn and repulsion, clinging and attachment and preference are natural, necessary, inevitable at a certain stage: they attend upon or they help to make and maintain Nature's choice in us. But to the Karmayogin they are a survival, a stumbling-block, a process of the Ignorance and, as he progresses, they fall away from his nature. The child-soul needs them for its growth; but they drop from an adult in the divine culture. In the God-nature to which we have to rise there can be an adamantine, even a destructive severity but not hatred, a divine irony but not scorn, a calm, clear-seeing and forceful rejection but not repulsion and dislike. Even what we have to destroy, we must not abhor or fail to recognise as a disguised and temporary movement of the Eternal.

And since all things are the one Self in its manifestation, we shall have equality of soul towards the ugly and the beautiful, the maimed and the perfect, the noble and the vulgar, the pleasant and the unpleasant, the good and the evil. Here also there will be no hatred, scorn and repulsion, but instead the equal eye that sees all things in their real character and their appointed place. For we shall know that all things express or disguise, develop or distort, as best they can or with whatever defect they must, under the circumstances intended for them, in the way possible to the immediate status or function or evolution of their nature, some truth or fact, some energy or potential of the Divine necessary by its presence in the progressive manifestation both to the whole of the present sum of things and for the perfection of the ultimate result. That truth is what we must seek and discover behind the transitory expression; undeterred by appearances, by the deficiencies or the disfigurements of the expression, we can then worship the Divine for ever unsullied, pure, beautiful and perfect behind His masks. All indeed has to be changed, not ugliness accepted but divine beauty, not imperfection taken as our resting-place but perfection striven after, the supreme good made the universal aim and not evil. But what we do has to be done with a spiritual understanding and knowledge, and it is a divine good, beauty, perfection, pleasure that has to be followed after, not the human standards of these things. If we have not equality, it is a sign that we are still pursued by the Ignorance, we shall truly understand nothing and it is more than likely that we shall destroy the old imperfection only to create another: for we are substituting the appreciations of our human mind and desire-soul for the divine values.

Equality does not mean a fresh ignorance or blindness; it does not call for and need not initiate a greyness of vision and a blotting out of all hues. Difference is there, variation of expression is there and this variation we shall appreciate,—far more justly than we could when the eye was clouded

by a partial and erring love and hate, admiration and scorn, sympathy and antipathy, attraction and repulsion. But behind the variation we shall always see the Complete and Immutable who dwells within it and we shall feel, know or at least, if it is hidden from us, trust in the wise purpose and divine necessity of the particular manifestation, whether it appear to our human standards harmonious and perfect or crude and unfinished or even false and evil.

And so too we shall have the same equality of mind and soul towards all happenings, painful or pleasurable, defeat and success, honour and disgrace, good repute and ill-repute, good fortune and evil fortune. For in all happenings we shall see the will of the Master of all works and results and a step in the evolving expression of the Divine. He manifests Himself, to those who have the inner eye that sees, in forces and their play and results as well as in things and in creatures. All things move towards a divine event; each experience, suffering and want no less than joy and satisfaction, is a necessary link in the carrying out of a universal movement which it is our business to understand and second. To revolt, to condemn, to cry out is the impulse of our unchastened and ignorant instincts. Revolt like everything else has its uses in the play and is even necessary, helpful, decreed for the divine development in its own time and stage; but the movement of an ignorant rebellion belongs to the stage of the soul's childhood or to its raw adolescence. The ripened soul does not condemn but seeks to understand and master, does not cry out but accepts or toils to improve and perfect, does not revolt inwardly but labours to obey and fulfil and transfigure. Therefore we shall receive all things with an equal soul from the hands of the Master. Failure we shall admit as a passage as calmly as success until the hour of the divine victory arrives. Our souls and minds and bodies will remain unshaken by acutest sorrow and suffering and pain, if in the divine dispensation they come to us, unoverpowered by intensest joy and pleasure. Thus supremely balanced we shall continue steadily on our way meeting all things with an equal calm until we are ready for a more exalted status and can enter into the supreme and universal Ananda.



This equality cannot come except by a protracted ordeal and patient self-discipline; so long as desire is strong, equality cannot come at all except in periods of quiescence and the fatigue of desire, and it is then more likely to be an inert indifference or desire's recoil from itself than the true calm and the positive spiritual oneness. Moreover, this discipline or this growth into equality of spirit has its necessary epochs and stages. Ordinarily we have to begin with a period of endurance; for we must learn to confront,

to suffer and to assimilate all contacts. Each fibre in us must be taught not to wince away from that which pains and repels and not to run eagerly towards that which pleases and attracts, but rather to accept, to face, to bear and to conquer. All touches we must be strong to bear, not only those that are proper and personal to us but those born of our sympathy or our conflict with the worlds around, above or below us and with their peoples. We shall endure tranquilly the action and impact on us of men and things and forces, the pressure of the gods and the assaults of Titans; we shall face and engulf in the unstirred seas of our spirit all that can possibly come to us down the ways of the soul's infinite experience. This is the stoical period of the preparation of equality, its most elementary and yet its heroic age. But this steadfast endurance of the flesh and heart and mind must be reinforced by a sustained sense of spiritual submission to a divine Will: this living clay must yield not only with a stern or courageous acquiescence, but with knowledge or with resignation, even in suffering, to the touch of the divine Hand that is preparing its perfection. A sage, a devout or even a tender stoicism of the God-lover is possible, and these are better than the merely pagan self-reliant endurance which may lend itself to a too great hardening of the vessel of God: for this kind prepares the strength that is capable of wisdom and of love; its tranquillity is a deeply moved calm that passes easily into bliss. The gain of this period of resignation and endurance is the soul's strength equal to all shocks and contacts.

There is next a period of high-seated impartiality and indifference in which the soul becomes free from exultation and depression and escapes from the snare of the eagerness of joy as from the dark net of the pangs of grief and suffering. All things and persons and forces, all thoughts and feelings and sensations and actions, one's own no less than those of others, are regarded from above by a spirit that remains intact and immutable and is not disturbed by these things. This is the philosophic period of the preparation of equality, a wide and august movement. But indifference must not settle into an inert turning away from action and experience; it must not be an aversion born of weariness, disgust and distaste, a recoil of disappointed or satiated desire, the sullenness of a baffled and dissatisfied egoism forced back from its passionate aims. These recoils come inevitably in the unripe soul and may in some way help the progress by a discouragement of the eager desire-driven vital nature, but they are not the perfection towards which we labour. The indifference or the impartiality that we must seek after is a calm superiority of the high-seated soul above the contacts of things;<sup>1</sup> it regards and accepts or rejects them but is not moved in the rejection and is not subjected by the acceptance. It begins

<sup>1</sup> *Udasina*

to feel itself near, kin to, one with a silent Self and Spirit self-existent and separate from the workings of Nature which it supports and makes possible, part of or merged in the motionless calm Reality that transcends the motion and action of the universe. The gain of this period of high transcendence is the soul's peace unrocked and unshaken by the pleasant ripples or by the tempestuous waves and billows of the world's movement.

If we can pass through these two stages of the inner change without being arrested or fixed in either, we are admitted to a greater divine equality which is capable of a spiritual ardour and tranquil passion of delight, a rapturous all-understanding and all-possessing equality of the perfected soul, an intense and even wideness and fullness of its being embracing all things. This is the supreme period and the passage to it is through the joy of a total self-giving to the Divine and to the universal Mother. For strength is then crowned by a happy mastery, peace deepens into bliss, the possession of the divine calm is uplifted and made the ground for the possession of the divine movement. But if this greater perfection is to arrive, the soul's impartial high-seatedness looking down from above on the flux of forms and personalities and movements and forces must be modified and change into a new sense of strong and calm submission and a powerful and intense surrender. This submission will be no longer a resigned acquiescence but a glad acceptance: for there will be no sense of suffering or of the bearing of a burden or cross; love and delight and the joy of self-giving will be its brilliant texture. And this surrender will be not only to a divine Will which we perceive and accept and obey, but to a divine Wisdom in the Will which we recognise and a divine Love in it which we feel and rapturously suffer, the wisdom and love of a supreme Spirit and Self of ourselves and all with which we can achieve a happy and perfect unity. A lonely power, peace and stillness is the last word of the philosophic equality of the sage; but the soul in its integral experience liberates itself from this self-created status and enters into the sea of a supreme and all-embracing ecstasy of the beginningless and endless beatitude of the Eternal. Then we are at last capable of receiving all contacts with a blissful equality, because we feel in them the touch of the imperishable Love and Delight that is for ever in the heart of things. The gain of this culmination in universal and equal rapture is the soul's delight and the opening gates of the Bliss that is infinite, the Joy that surpasses all understanding.



Before this labour for the annihilation of desire and the conquest of the soul's equality can come to its absolute perfection and fruition, that turn of the spiritual movement must have been completed which leads

to the abolition of the sense of ego. But for the worker the renunciation of the egoism of action is the most important element in this change. For even when by giving up the fruits and the desire of the fruits to the Master of the Sacrifice we have parted with the egoism of rajasic desire, we may still have kept the egoism of the worker. Still we are subject to the sense that we are ourselves the doer of the act, ourselves its source and ourselves the giver of the sanction. It is still the "I" that chooses and determines, it is still the "I" that undertakes the responsibility and feels the demerit or the merit. An entire removal of this separative ego-sense is an essential aim of our Yoga. If any ego is to remain in us for a while it is only a form of it which knows itself to be a form and is ready to disappear as soon as a true centre of consciousness is manifested or built in us. That true centre is a luminous formulation of the one Consciousness and a pure channel and instrument of the one Existence. A support for the individual manifestation and action of the universal Force, it gradually reveals behind it the true Person in us, the central eternal being, an everlasting being of the Supreme, a power and portion of the transcendent Shakti.<sup>1</sup>

Here too, in this movement by which the soul divests itself gradually of the obscure robe of the ego, there is a progress by marked stages. For not only the fruit of works belongs to the Lord alone, but our works also must be His; He is the true Lord of our action no less than of our results. This we must not see with the thinking mind only, it must become entirely true to our entire consciousness and will. The sadhaka has not only to think and know but to see and feel concretely and intensely even in the moment of the working and in its initiation and whole process that his works are not his at all, but are coming through him from the Supreme Existence. He must be always aware of a Force, a Presence, a Will that acts through his individual nature. But there is in taking this turn the danger that he may confuse his own disguised or sublimated ego or an inferior power with the Lord and substitute its demands for the supreme dictates. He may fall into a common ambush of this lower nature and distort his supposed surrender to a higher Power into an excuse for a magnified and uncontrolled indulgence of his own self-will and even of his desires and passions. A great sincerity is asked for and has to be imposed not only on the conscious mind but still more on the subliminal part of us which is full of hidden movements. For there is there, especially in our subliminal vital nature, an incorrigible charlatan and actor. The sadhaka must first have advanced far in the elimination of desire and in the firm equality of his soul towards all workings and all happenings before he can utterly lay down the burden of his works on the Divine. At every moment

<sup>1</sup> *amā sanātanah, para prakṛtir jivabhūtā*

he must proceed with a vigilant eye upon the deceits of the ego and the ambushes of the misleading Powers of Darkness who ever represent themselves as the one source of Light and Truth and take on them a simulacrum of divine forms in order to capture the soul of the seeker.

Immediately he must take the further step of relegating himself to the position of the Witness. Aloof from the Prakriti, impersonal and dispassionate, he must watch the executive Nature-Force at work within him and understand its action; he must learn by this separation to recognise the play of her universal forces, distinguish her interweaving of light and night, the divine and the undivine, and detect her formidable Powers and Beings that use the ignorant human creature. Nature works in us, says the Gita, through the triple quality of Prakriti, the quality of light and good, the quality of passion and desire and the quality of obscurity and inertia. The seeker must learn to distinguish, as an impartial and discerning witness of all that proceeds within this kingdom of his nature, the separate and the combined action of these qualities; he must pursue the workings of the cosmic forces in him through all the labyrinth of their subtle unseen processes and disguises and know every intricacy of the maze. As he proceeds in this knowledge, he will be able to become the giver of the sanction and no longer remain an ignorant tool of Nature. At first he must induce the Nature-Force in its action on his instruments to subdue the working of its two lower qualities and bring them into subjection to the quality of light and good and, afterwards, he must persuade that again to offer itself so that all three may be transformed by a higher Power into their divine equivalents, supreme repose and calm, divine illumination and bliss, the eternal divine dynamis, Tapas. The first part of this discipline and change can be firmly done in principle by the will of the mental being in us; but its full execution and the subsequent transformation can be done only when the deeper psychic soul increases its hold on the nature and replaces the mental being as its ruler. When this happens, he will be ready to make, not only with an aspiration and intention and an initial and progressive self-abandonment but with the most intense actuality of dynamic self-giving, the complete renunciation of his works to the Supreme Will. By degrees his mind of an imperfect human intelligence will be replaced by a spiritual and illumined mind and that can in the end enter into the supramental Truth-Light; he will then no longer act from his nature of the Ignorance with its three modes of confused and imperfect activity, but from a diviner nature of spiritual calm, light, power and bliss. He will act not from an amalgam of an ignorant mind and will with the drive of a still more ignorant heart of emotion and the desire of the life-being and the urge and instinct of the flesh, but first from a spiritualised self and nature and, last, from a supramental Truth-consciousness.

and its divine force of supernature.

Thus are made possible the final steps when the veil of Nature is withdrawn and the seeker is face to face with the Master of all existence and his activities are merged in the action of a supreme Energy which is pure, true, perfect and blissful for ever. Thus can he utterly renounce to the supra-mental Shakti his works as well as the fruits of his works and act only as the conscious instrument of the eternal Worker. No longer giving the sanction, he will rather receive in his instruments and follow in her hands a divine mandate. No longer doing works, he will accept their execution through him by her unsleeping Force. No longer willing the fulfilment of his own mental constructions and the satisfaction of his own emotional desires, he will obey and participate in an omnipotent Will that is also an omniscient Knowledge and a mysterious, magical and unfathomable Love and a vast bottomless sea of the eternal Bliss of Existence.

SRI AUROBINDO

### *The Future Poetry \** (Continued)

#### RECENT ENGLISH POETRY (I)

THE movement away from Victorian poetry is not yet definitive, but we can distinguish certain original indications which may help us to disengage the final whither of its seeking. In the mass it appears as a broadening of the English poetic mind into a full oneness with the great stream of modern thought and tendency. There are experiments of all kinds in language and rhythm and subject-matter and treatment, many notable names each with his special turn and personality, but no supreme decisive speech and no gathering up of the many threads into a great representative work. The whole of European literature at the present time is of this character. All that can be done is to distinguish some common characteristics, a certain persistent element, certain potential issues. The thing that strikes at once in a general view is that it is a period of transition, not yet a new age, but the preparation for a new age of humanity. Everywhere there is a seeking after some new thing, a discontent with the moulds, ideas and powers of the past, a spirit of innovation, a desire to get at deeper powers of language, rhythm, form, because a subtler and vaster life is in birth; there are deeper and more significant things to be said than have yet been spoken, and poetry the highest essence of speech, must find a fitting voice for them.

\* A summary of Sri Aurobindo's Future Poetry ("Arya" 1917-1920)

The straining for a new power of rhythm is the first indication of the coming change. Mankind is moving to another spirit in its thought, and this must find its echo and interpretation in poetry, which to express this greater spirit must find out a deeper, larger, more flexible, or, if one may say so, more multitudinously expressive rhythm than the great poets of the past were under the necessity of using; something of the same change has to be achieved as has been successfully in music. The eager and impatient urge of the arriving age to find a full rhythmic basis for its own way of self-expression has led to an attempt to search out new packed or dissolved movements, even to initiate a violent and unprecedented revolution in the whole fundamental method of poetic rhythm.

This tendency in some writers goes no farther than an irregular use of metre, but pushed to its logical issue it has created the still growing form of free verse of which we now find examples in most of the great literary languages and coupled with a theory that this is the one future chance for poetry. Meter and rhyme, half ornament, half fetter, are said to be played out, which can no longer be allowed to chain and hamper the great and free movement which the enlarging spirit of poetry demands. This is a theory of very doubtful validity. In the hands of most of its exponents it seems to be in practice nothing but a licence for writing prose in variously cut lengths, prose breaking off at the end of a clause or in the middle of it to go on refreshed in the line below,—I have seen even a line of free verse consisting of a majestic solitary pronoun,—and that is more an eccentric method of printing than a new rhythm. But without accepting the theory in its intolerant entirety one can appreciate the motive which moved the greater masters and more skilful craftsmen of this form. Life and thought and spirit today need, to express it sympathetically, vast and flowing movements or on the contrary, brief, sudden and abrupt paces or the alternation of these and intermediate variant lengths and turns; it needs some form which shall have the liberty of prose and yet command the intensified heights and fluctuations and falls of the cadence of poetry. There is no reason why not, if the thing can be done—the proof of these things lies in the execution; but it may be doubted whether the method used is the right method. At any rate it has not been fully justified even in the hands of its greatest or most skilful exponents, Whitman, Carpenter and certain French writers. These are things that need to be done, but it remains to be seen whether they cannot be done in the recognised and characteristic movement of poetry, rather than in a compromise with prose cadences.

The most considerable representatives of this new and free form of poetic rhythm are Carpenter and Whitman. Tagore's translations have come in as a powerful adventitious aid. It cannot and does not try to compete with the established principle of measure, and serves certain purposes which could not

otherwise be fulfilled. It is perhaps the only method for the work Tagore intended. Tagore is what some of the French writers of *vers libre* are and Whitman and Carpenter are not, a delicate and subtle craftsman; but in these translations he has no intention of displacing the old way of poetry in which he has done in his own language such wonderful things, by a new principle of poetic movement. If there were any such intention, it would have to be pronounced a failure. Compare his English prose, beautiful as it is, with the singer's own native and magical melodies, even though the intellectual substance is more effective in the translation. In the original the intellectual element is constantly overborne and sometimes almost swallowed up by the waves of suggestion that come stealing in with the music; so much more is heard than is said that the soul listening goes floating into that infinity and counts the definite contribution of the intelligence as of a lesser value. Precisely there lies the greatest power of poetic rhythm for the very highest work that the new age has to do, and that it can be done by a new use in the poetic method, without breaking the whole form of poetry, Tagore's own lyrical work in his mother tongue is the best evidence.

Whitman's aim is consciously to make a great revolution in the whole method of poetry, and if anybody could have succeeded, it ought to have been this giant of poetic thought, this spiritual crowned athlete. He is a great poet, one of the greatest in the power of his substance, the energy of his vision, the force of his style, the largeness at once of his personality and his universality. His is the most Homeric voice since Homer, in spite of the modern's ruder less elevated aesthetics of speech and the difference between that limited Olympian and this broad-souled Titan. Whitman will remain great after all the objections that can be made against his method or his use of it, but the question is whether what served his unique personality can be made a rule for lesser or different spirits, will not be fatal when not saved by his all-uplifting largeness.

Whitman's verse, if it can be so called, is not simply a cadenced prose, though quite a multitude of his lines only just rise above the prose rhythm. The difference is that there is a constant will to intensify the fall of the movement so that instead of the unobtrusive ictus of prose, we have a fall of the tread, almost a beat and sometimes a real beat. In this kind of rhythm we find actually three different levels, a gradation which is very instructive. First we have a movement which just manages to be other than prose movement, but is yet full of the memory of a certain kind of prose rhythm. Here the first defect is that the ear is sometimes irritated, sometimes disappointed and baulked by a divided demand. Much of Whitman's work is in this manner; he carries it off by the largeness and sea-like roll of the total impression, but others have not the same success,

—even the French craftsmen are weighted down,—and in them the whole has a draggled and painful effect of an amphibious waddling incertitude. But there is a nobler level at which he often keeps which does not get out of sight of prose plain or lift up above all its gravitation but yet had a certain poetic power, greatness and nobility of movement. But it is still below what the master measure of poetry would have given.

However the possibilities of an instrument have to be judged by its greatest effects, and there are poems, lines, passages in which Whitman strikes out a harmony which has no kinship to nor any memory of the prose gravitation, but is as far above it as anything done in the great metrical cadences. This is the arriving at the same secret principle of choric or dithyrambic poetry turned to the law of a language which has not the strong resources of quantity. When Arnold writes such a line as

The too vast orb of her fate

it is this choric movement that he reproduces. When Whitman gives us the dactylic and spondaic harmony of his lines,

Out of the cradle endlessly rocking,  
Out of the mocking bird's throat, the musical shuttle,  
Out of the ninth-month midnight

or the subtly varied movement of this other passage,

Over the hoarse surging of the sea,  
Or flitting from brier to brier by day,  
I saw, I heard at intervals the remaining one, the he-bird,  
The solitary guest from Alabama,

one has almost the rhythmical illusion of listening to a Sophoclean or Aeschylean chorus. Tagore has recently attempted a similar kind of free verse in Bengali. This then seems to be the natural highwater mark of free poetical rhythm, it is a use of the poetical principle of measure in its essence without the limitations of set form.

We may get some idea of the limitations of the form by one or two examples from the poetry of Carpenter. With a poetic faculty of a higher order, less rough and great than Whitman, he too found it impossible to restrain the largeness of his vision and personality in the bonds of metrical poetry. But his lesser abundance of drive and force makes us feel more the limitations of his form. The total effect is the sense of what might almost call a noble and chanting super-prose rhythm.

Let us take an example from his work at its normal level. He begins with a strain which is just distinguishable from the prose strain, but suddenly rises from it to the beginning of a choric elevation,

"As one shuts a door after a long confinement in the house  
—so out of your own plans and purposes escaping,—"

then comes the full choric rise,

"Out of the mirror-lined chambers of self (grand though they be,  
but O how dreary!) in which you have hitherto spent your  
life,—"

where, if the line had only ended with the parenthesis, it would have been a strain of perfect choric poetry, magnificently thought, imaged and cadenced, but the closing words spoil the effect, for they are a sharp descent to the prose level. These fluctuations appear then to be inherent in the form and a form which in the name of freedom and closeness to life remits and relaxes the austerity of the search after perfection, whatever its other merits and advantages, means a laxity of effort and is a dangerous downward concession.

But there is another objection which may be denied, but seems to me true, that this kind of verse does not give its full spiritual value to the poet's speech. Carpenter has a power of substance, thought-vision, image, expression which is rare and in all these respects he would have been recognised as not only equal but superior to many who have enjoyed in their own day the reputation of poets of the first rank. That he is not so recognised is due to the inferior form. Whitman too for all his energy loses in this way. Their form and movement has not that stamp of something going absolutely home and, having entered, that takes possession and dwells in a calm, yet vibrating mastery. It does only a little more than a highly concentrated prose might do, and this is because of the need of the three indispensable intensities of poetry: it may have intensity of thought and soul-substance, intensity of expression, but the intensity of rhythm, which is poetry's primal need, is lowered and diluted. If that is so, those who use this form to meet the demands of the new age are on the wrong track. But a demand is there, and it indicates a real need. The new age is only at its commencement; the decisive departures, the unforeseen creations may yet be due which will equip it with an instrument or many instruments suited to the largeness, depth and subtlety of the coming spirit, by new discoveries within the principle of the intenser poetical rhythm.

## RECENT ENGLISH POETRY (2)

The present age is so loose, fluid and many-motived that even the similarity which the spirit of the age always gives to its work of creation is not easily tangible and works out in much less of a family resemblance than in the Victorian poets or their predecessors. Only in the Celtic revival have there been a number of considerable writers united by a common artistic motive and ideal, and it may be for that reason that a certain persistent thing which is striving to be and get expression in the poetry of the time finds itself in a first illumination, emerges as a conscious power and seeks for its adequate form and rhythm. But we find it elsewhere too in obscurer forms; this is the most original, the most unworked and fruitful in promise for the future and represents the highest possibility of a greater coming poetry. A distinct spiritual turn, the straining towards a deeper, more potent, supra-intellectual and supra-vital vision of things in the innermost secret of creative power. Now increasingly the highest turn of the human mind also indicates a large and similar opening of its vision to self as well as the person of man and the spirit of Nature, an infinite self-discovery which will resolve the present multitude of standpoints, all the conflict and chaos of manifold-seeking and new formation, into the harmony of a centralising and embracing outlook.

The poets of yesterday and today, Whitman, Carpenter, the Irish poets, Tagore, but also others in their degree are forerunners of this new spirit and way of seeing. I may take for my purpose four of them—Meredith and Phillips among recent English poets, A.E. and Yeats of the Irish singers. The former work in the English tradition, have the spiritual opening at moments in a high clarity, but follow other attractions, form and treatment which lead away from the pursuit of the direct seeing and the perfect manner. The consistent note we get more consistently in the Irish poets, freer in mind from this past tradition, they have too an original inspiration in the Celtic spirit, temperament and tradition; they escape from the overstress of the intellectual and vital notes which in their English kindred and compeers take from the direct purity of utterance of their spirit, and they also have the artistic faculty and genius. Without having the greatness of scope and plenitude of power they yet lead and prepare, strike great new notes, open or at least give hints of great new ways for a future poetry.

One thing that strikes among all of them is a novel use of rhythmic movement, and as a secret of this departure a quite other conscious aim in the way of seeing the object on which the inner eye is turned. This aim we may perhaps best express if we take up and modify a phrase of Meredith's when he speaks of the hampered human voice that could never say

"Our inmost in the sweetest way." The new turn of the poetic voice is precisely an endeavour to see and to say our inmost in the inmost way.

This inwardness is the triumph of great poetical speech, whether the poet be Homer or Shakespeare. The manner and yield of poetry vary according to the depth we penetrate into that inner something which is hidden by layer upon layer of many an intervening medium, which offers and gives itself wonderfully in all of them, yet seems to retreat always and invites to a profounder pursuit and discovery. But this new way of seeing is a first effort to get through the object and the medium and employ them only as suggestive instruments, to break beyond the life-force and the emotion, the imagination and the idea, not to be stopped by these things, though using the inmost life-stress, the inmost releasing force of the emotion, the inmost plunge of the imagination or its most scorching power of form, colour and symbol, the inmost penetrating subtlety of the idea and to arrive at what we may call the soul-sense, the soul-sound and as far as may be the soul-word interpretative of some yet deeper revealing truth in all their objects. That is the turn of mind which is now making itself heard in effort, though not in full mastery, stammered here, there sung with a slight, delicate, and subtle sweetness or with an initial load of rare or crowding suggestion, but waiting still the splendour of the master-song that shall rise into the light of the spirit,—

So pure that it salutes the sun,  
The voice of one for millions,  
In whom the millions rejoice  
For giving their one spirit voice.

Rhythm is the most potent, founding element of poetic expression, and specially when there is this more subtle spiritual aim, the rhythmical movement becomes of a new importance. We find accordingly the beginning, sometimes something more, of another spirit in the movement of this poetry. These poets use for the most part old established metrical forms or variations of them; when there are departures, they do not go very far from the familiar base; but in their way of using them we are as far as possible in its intrinsic principle from the method of the older poets. The change may be described as a more complex subordination of the metrical insistence to the inner suggestion of the movement. The old poets depended greatly on the metrical fall, made much of the external mould and its possible devices and filled it with the tones of life or thought or the excitement of the thing that possessed them to speech. The following examples show this of course with considerable variation;

Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast  
Seal up the shipboy's eyes and rock his brains  
In cradle of the rude imperious surge?

These thoughts that wander through eternity.

Rarely, rarely comest thou,  
Spirit of Delight.

For old unhappy far-off things  
And battles long ago.

And wild roses and ivy serpentine.

Breaking the silence of the seas  
Among the farthest Hebrides.

The base of the old poetry is a march, a walk, or a lilt, a measured flow, roll or surge,—even in the freest movement there is a prevailing metrical insistence. In the new movement the old base is there, but whatever show it may make, its real importance tends to drop into a very second place. Insistence of tone has taken full possession of or even conquered the insistence of the fall. A spiritual intonation, not content to fill and at its strongest overflow the metrical mould, but insistent to take into itself and carrying it rather than carried in it, is the secret of its melody or its harmony.

The main reliance on the metrical stress can leave room in powerful hands for very great rhythms, but it has its limitations, from which different poets try to get release by different devices. These more recent poets, whatever metrical devices they may use, depend upon something else, on a method which at its clearest becomes a principle of pure sound intonation.

Phillips' blank verse which is of a very original mould, is built on this principle. Four lines come together,

The history of a flower in the air  
Liable but to breezes and to time,  
As rich and purposeless as is the rose,  
Thy simple doom is to be beautiful,

in which there are only three stresses, in the last one might almost say two and a half, a small number of quantitatively long syllable are the physical support of the verse—as if quantity were trying to come back to first importance in a language of stress,—and the rest is made up of varying minor

tones. Or the long-drawn-out syllables are brought in in great abundance in a variety of combinations, closely packed and largely spaced, as in

The fiery funeral of foliage old.  
 With slow sweet surgery restore the brain.  
 The vault closed back, woe upon woe, the wheel  
 Revolved, the stone rebounded, for that time  
 Hades her interrupted life resumed.

These and others are the means used, but at their back is the principle of free intonation. The significance is that the poet has a rhythm of thought and spirit already sounding somewhere within him and in bringing it out he imposes it consciously on his outer instrument with an imperious sovereignty and does not get to it, like the old masters, as the result of a faithful observance of the metrical harmony.

Meredith's poetry belongs to an earlier technique, observes faithfully the metrical law, but the subtler thing is already coming.

Through widening chambers of surprise to where  
 Throbs rapture near an end that aye recedes,  
 Because his touch is infinite and lends  
 A younder to all ends—

a description which might well be applied to the whole drift and cause of this spiritual principle of rhythm. A.E. is not a great rhythmist,—he is too preoccupied with his vision, more of a truth-seer than a truth-hearer of the Spirit, but when hearing comes, somehow or other without any expenditure of device the full spiritual intonation rises up and takes possession of the music:

Like winds and waters were her ways:  
 They heed not immemorial cries;  
 They move to their high destinies  
 Beyond the little voice that prays.

And in Yeats, this spiritual intonation is the very secret of all his subtlest melodies and harmonies. We get it in his blank verse, taken at random,—

A sweet miraculous terrifying sound,—

or heard through the slowly errant footfalls of that other,

In all poor things that live a day  
 Eternal Beauty wandering on her way,

but most of all in the lyrical movements.

This intoned music, to find a form for which these poets are trying, in which the outer form becomes an external subtle means and suggestion, but the building power is different and brings in a spiritual accompaniment which is the real thing we have to listen to, opens at least one line on which we can arrive at that greater hearing whose wave can bring with it the inspiring word of a higher vision. For the musical tone of the older poetry is the simply sensuous, the emotional, the thought or the life tone with the spiritual cadence as the result of some strong intensity of these things, but here is some beginning of a direct spiritual intonation.

SISIR-KUMAR GHOSH

## *Readings from the Upanishads*

### CONCLUSION

NOW we come to the close of this short series of discourses on the central aspect of the Upanishads. The choice of the texts for the headline of each article was determined with an eye to what we consider to be the most important element, the practical side which is the soul of these Teachings. The texts were all chosen deliberately from the Chhandogya with the exception of one from the Katha Upanishad. The reason will be presently made clear. Now that we are concluding this series we shall put in sum the distinctive features of the Sadhanas dealt with as well as the elements common to all of them. The position we have taken up in regard to the Upanishads we shall explain briefly but in precise terms at the close.

It is generally held that two of the major Upanishads, the Isha and the Taittiriya are most valued by Sri Aurobindo and they are a great support to his Teachings. There is considerable truth in this for the reason that the Isha gives us a comprehensive picture of the ultimate Truth, presents a reconciliation of the Opposites and closes with an appeal to the Gods of the Vedic pantheon Agni, Vayu, Surya, for the uplift of man; while the Taittiriya gives us a vision of Brahman in the graded existence as Matter, Life, Mind, Vijnana, Ananda. But a caution is necessary here: it is not that Sri Aurobindo's teachings in general or his Philosophy in particular are based upon these

Upanishads or any other scripture for that matter, even the Rig Veda or the Bhagavad Gita. At the same time if he values and writes upon them it is because they are not theories and doctrines but Words of Wisdom based upon Truth-knowledge, Truths lived which he finds can always be verified by any aspirant in earnest. If he has not taken up the other Upanishads either for commentary or translation it is mainly because they are very lengthy and require lengthier commentaries and partly perhaps because they are not quite compact like the Isha or Kena. And we know that he could not take up even the Taittiriya for translation or commentary. Therefore it is not to be supposed that the other Upanishads in his view are not of importance or less authentic for acceptance as texts recording the Truth-realisations of the sages of the original Vedanta.

While there are other reasons for selecting the passages of Chhandogya for the elucidation of the chief Sadhanas of the Upanishads, incidentally we have the advantage of studying parts of those texts not dealt with by Sri Aurobindo, thus enabling ourselves to appreciate them in the light of his Yoga and Philosophy in general. But the reason for choosing the Chhandogya is to show that most of the Sadhanas discussed in the Brahma-sutras are taken from this Upanishad though some of these are mentioned in the Brihadaranyaka also. Again it is the Brahma-sutras much more than the Upanishads and the Gita that later became the field for the commentators to fight out the battles for their respective systems of Philosophy. A word about the Brahma-sutras, though an apparent digression, is useful here; for it is necessary to have a clear conception of their character and position in regard to the Scriptures on the one hand and on the other to the systems of Philosophy established by the Acharyas of later times. The main object of this work of Badarayana is investigation (Mimamsa) into the purport of the textual passages of the Upanishads including those which appear doubtful or contradictory and to come to a decisive conclusion. We may note in passing, that there was a threefold division of the Shruti into what is called the Karma-kanda the section dealing with rituals, Upasana-kanda<sup>1</sup> that dealing with worship and meditation and Jnana-kanda that dealing with Knowledge. In the Adwaitic tradition of the later Vedantins the Upasanas are drowned in the Karma-kanda and in the commentaries on the Upasanas which form part of the topics in the Vedanta Sutras, they are either treated as subservient to rituals, *Karmanga* or as

<sup>1</sup> Jaimini, the author of Purva Mimamsa, is said to have written sixteen Adhyayas of which the first twelve deal with the Karma-kanda and the last four with Upasana, called Sankarsha-kanda to which references are made in the Sri Bhashya of Ramanuja on Br. Sutras III.3. But the work is lost and is not the same as its namesake available in the Adyar Library. This is the conclusion of specialists in Mimamsa like the late lamented MM. Ganganath Jha.

some sort of help leading to a gradual liberation, *Krama-mukti*, and therefore of course, inferior paths meant for the ignorant and the incompetent. Whether the Brahma-sutras themselves proclaim the ultimate Truth as Nirguna, Impersonal, Featureless, the Beyond, the Absolute, and the Upasanas are all inferior ways of the weaklings is a question that has been debated upon for centuries now and the debate is sure to continue as long as dialectics is the be-all and end-all of scholars and pundits. Nevertheless we may draw attention to the undeniable fact, whatever be the gloss and improvements on it, that the Vedanta Sutras conclude with what is called Saguna Brahman, and true to the Scriptures it affirms in the well-known *Ubhaya-linga* topic, based on the Chhandogya text, that Brahman is at once both Saguna and Nirguna, Personal and Impersonal.

This is the purpose of the Chhandogya chosen for most of the Sadhanas we have discussed in this series. Let us then put in a nutshell the salient features of each of these spiritual disciplines, the Sadhanas of these Scriptures. The Narada-Sanatkumara episode concerns itself with what is called Bhuma Vidya. The discipline aims at the realisation of the Infinite Self beyond the ignorance. Satyakama's *forte* is Prana Vidya, the discipline that leads to the conscious union with the creative Energy, Prana, the Tapas of Ishwara, and is, as we have noticed, the most dynamic of all the Vidyas of the Upanishads. The *Agni-rahasya* gives us the Vidya of Shandilya and here the soul is envisaged as Spirit in its relation to its embodiment in life, to its encasement in mind as well as to its Source, Support, Power and Light in the all-pervading Purusha. It is the most comprehensive of all the Sadhanas and begins with the centre of the Spirit as soul, the seat of God—the heart; it takes a survey of and aims at the realisation of the All Spirit becoming the soul in each. The Rishis seek from Ashvapati Kaikeya for a knowledge of the Universal Fire which is the Self in each and the all. This discipline called Vaishvanara Vidya aims at the realisation of the Cosmic Self active in each being and starts, as usual with most of the Upanishadic Sadhanas, with the heart. We have not taken up all the Sadhanas mentioned in the Chhandogya Upanishad but the most prominent of them discussed here are sure to give a general idea of the importance attached to them in these texts and also cover most of the other main Vidyas such as the Dahara or Samvarga as has been shown in the discussion on Prana Vidya. From the Brihadaranyaka we took up for clarification the Doctrine of the Mystic Honey,<sup>1</sup> and showed that it reconciles the relative Reality of World-Existence with the Absolute Monism to which the Brihadaranyaka tends in some of its sections—notably the Maitreyi Brahmana

<sup>1</sup> This appeared in the Second Number of the Sri Aurobindo Circle Bombay, under the title of "Vedic Wisdom in the Vedanta".

which precedes the section on the Mystic Honey, called the Madhu Brahmana. Even this Upanishad which in some important parts is the stronghold for the "Lofty Illusionism" of the later Vedantins is not wholly in favour of the negation of world-existence but looks upon it as a Creation of Delight, an Existence which subsists by interdependence of the whole and the part, a Manifestation which subsists because of the Honey, the Madhu in it. The chief points in the Katha text already discussed need not be repeated here. But there is one fact which must be borne in mind that has a bearing on the Sadhana, the practical aspect which was hinted. As a rule the Upanishads teach that the heart is the seat of the soul, the Self, the Divine Being and there one must enter and commune with and realise the Truth, God or Self, the object of his seeking. The Katha indeed throws luminous suggestions in regard to the actual Sadhana that arrives at the goal. But the subtle truth that no Sadhana is possible at all without faith at the very start shall not be missed. It is well known that Nachiketas was afflicted with doubt when he approached Yama but he had also the faith and says so "Teach me, I have faith". In this connection the verses VI, 12-13 are remarkable in that they drive home the fact that It cannot be known by one who does not have the faith that It is there in him. It must be realised within one's own being as the Presence, as the Manifest in him and then its essential Truth as the Unmanifest dawns on him. The Katha emphasises the necessity of realising It here in the bodily existence.

The special feature of each of these Sadhanas lies in the view-points from which the approach is made towards the ultimate reality Atman, God, Brahman full of features or devoid of them. The Bhuma Vidya starts with a strong and constant remembrance, *dhruva smriti*, an intuition—not the same as realisation—earned by purification of the stuff of the instrumental being, *sattwa shuddhi*, which is the same as *dhatu-prasada*, crystalline purity of the temperament. It aims at the realisation of Bhuma, the Plenum, the Infinite Self. The Prana Vidya starts with the Life-principle arriving at its source in the Creative Spirit, the Tapas or the active Consciousness of the Lord. The Shandilya discipline starts with the soul as related to the instruments of life and mind in the bodily existence on the one hand and on the other, to the Light, Power and Will of the Universal Self—a most comprehensive vision that takes in a sweep all the complexities of the soul in its various aspects. The Universal Spirit, the Fire in each being and the all, the feeling and realisation in each of its oneness with the Cosmic Self and Cosmic Life is the theme of Ashvapati in the Vaishvanara Sadhana. The doubt about the survival of something of man that afflicts Nachiketas is just a surface appearance of the hunger of the soul with which Nachiketas starts and receives the initiation from Yama into the secrets

of the Immortal Existence, Manifest and Unmanifest to be realised in this life before the body falls.

But there is a feature common to all the Sadhanas. For there is no mention of the procedure of the particular Sadhana that is expounded, not to speak of the details at all. The Sadhana or Vidya as it is called, is just named after the Teacher or the Initiate or the central aspect of the Vidya itself with a few hints in regard to the object of realisation and its fruit, or even without any hint at all. The reason is not far to seek. For when we carefully go through these texts, ere long we discover the fact that these Sadhanas, these methods of approach were transmitted by the Master to the disciple and verbal instruction when necessary at all to accompany the initiation given, was either not recorded or only briefly hinted at in these Scriptures. And this is so because the real Sadhana begins with initiation and not with oral instruction though the latter may be in some cases helpful giving just a sort of mental satisfaction. This is the central truth of initiation that the Guru gives the method, not the written word, not the spoken word even; but he gives the Word in silence which is a power, an influence that emanates from his being and consciousness so tangibly received and felt that one may say that the Guru himself is born in the disciple, while at the same time the latter is the spiritual child of the Master. Thus an unbroken succession, *santati* of these Vidyas was maintained in the olden times. The Guru then is one who has the capacity to reach his realisations to others who seek him for the knowledge. This truth about the initiation is implicit everywhere in the Upanishads and explicitly stated also in some places as when King Ashvapati addresses Aruni and others saying "I shall make you realise" to which attention has been drawn in the discourse on Vaishvanara Vidya. Again quite straightly the sages in the Prashna Upanishad (VI. 8) address the teacher Pippalada in these words: "Thou indeed art our Father who takes us safe across the other shore of ignorance". Then there is the famous dictum of these scriptures so often quoted by the Acharyas "He knows who has a Guru *acharyavan purusho veda*". We can take it that it is this fact about the true Upadesha that is elucidated in the utterances of Sri Krishna in the Gita—"The Jnanins who are the seers of the Truth shall give the initiation into knowledge...The Jnanin is Myself".

It is beyond doubt that Sadhana was given through initiation by the teacher to the pupil and this accounts for the absence of details or elaborate explanations with which we are familiar in the writings of later treatises on the Sadhana Shastra. And again one notable fact about the Sadhana of the Upanishads is this that even the most abstract form of Sadhana requires for its consummation some help from outside the range of the personal self. The help is obvious in the case of one having a Guru from

the very start as has been already stated. Even in the Bhuma Vidya where the Sadhaka starts on the path with sufficient purity and strength, with a certain settled intuitive grasp of the Truth, it is said Skanda Sanatkumara has to favour him with his help to take him across the other shore of ignorance, sorrow and death. Or we find in the Kena that the Goddess Uma, the universal Matrix has to come to the help of the Gods headed by Indra for the true knowledge of the ultimate Reality, Brahman. Even in the instance of the Atma-sadhana, the Katha and Mundaka texts state that it is the Atman who reveals his own body (of Truth) to him who makes an exclusive choice of the Atman. We may note here the interesting fact that the Atman according to these Scriptures has a will to choose, to reveal its body of Truth thus implying that he is not as mute and absolutely immutable and static as our mind is trained to fancy, not absolutely devoid of the dynamic element, namely, to choose to reveal himself to the exclusive seeker. Or the exclusive seeking itself is the result of the choice that has already been made by the Self. Thus different approaches and their corresponding realisations are mentioned in the Upanishads.

There is another feature common to all these texts. When statements are made either in regard to the disciplines that yield the desired results or to the ultimate Reality which apparently differ, they are not treated as contradictory but are looked upon as authentic, each in its own context. An instance will suffice to show that this is the case. There are texts which proclaim that there are "Two Purushas unborn, *dvau ajau*"; again there are others which speak of the Reality as the One Absolute; at times the same text may contain two different statements which may not seem to be in accord with each other. We find that the authors of the Upanishads nowhere refute any of these texts or statements in part as opposed to truth or as unworthy of notice, but on the other hand treat them as authentic because they know they are statements of facts of spiritual experience. They do not even take the trouble of reconciling such statements as are seemingly opposed to one another because they are alive to the fact that all such apparent contradictions have no bases in the realm of the Truth which can be realised in diverse ways through many aspects. It is not that a reasoned reconciliation of the opposites was not known to them as is evidenced in the texts of the Isha Upanishad. The question of attempting a reconciliation yielding a certain amount of intellectual satisfaction did not occupy the attention of the seers and thinkers of the Upanishads, but was left to Badarayana the author of the Vedanta Sutras. But the commentators who came later on constructed their Systems of Philosophy always based upon a Truth-realisation—as indeed Philosophy in India has always been—sought support for their systems from the Scriptures including the Brahma-Sutras. In the process of interpreting the Sutras for their support they have for the most part undone the work

of reconciliation undertaken by the author of the Sutras. This was because each commentator found certain texts to be convenient and accorded them a place of honour and prime importance, while those that were found not helpful from their standpoint and quite inconvenient for their philosophical constructions were treated as of secondary value. And this was done in spite of the recognition on their part that these texts as a whole are authentic records of Knowledge gained by the sages of the early Vedantas. The resultant position was inescapable that sheer dialectics led to the ditches, to the trenches of philosophical warfare while knowledge and action, *jnana* and *karma*, and laterly, devotion *bhakti* became discordant and warring elements what were and should have been shown to be the elements of concord and peace for a synthetic grasp of these great Scriptures of universal importance.

Our position then in regard to the Upanishads, especially to their practical importance, may be best stated in the words of Sri Aurobindo who finds that each of the realisations is true and the truth of any one need not and does not nullify the truth of any other. "In liberation the individual soul realises itself as the One (that is yet Many). It may plunge into the One and merge or hide itself in its bosom—that is the *laya* of the Adwaita; it may feel its oneness and yet as part of the Many that is the One enjoy the Divine, that is the Vishishtadwaita liberation; it may lay stress on its Many aspect and go on playing with Krishna in the eternal Brindavan, that is the Dwaita liberation. Or it may, even being liberated remain in the Lila or Manifestation or descend into it as often as it likes. The Divine is not bound by human philosophies—it is free in its play and free in its essence."

One more feature—and this is the last to be mentioned here—common to these Upanishads is that they purport to bring out the truths of the *mantras*, the Veda; even for their conclusions, for their announcements they quote for their support as authority the Vedic seers and their words, the Riks. The appropriateness of the Riks quoted in the Doctrine of the Mystic Honey is an instance in point. The Riks or their seers are very often quoted or mentioned in these texts and this is not due to any kind of sentimental regard, but due to the fact that the sages of the Upanishads knew that there were truths of spiritual and occult knowledge embedded in the Vedas. We have already shown in the discourse on the Vaishvanara Vidya that the discipline was directly inspired by the Hymns of the Rig Veda and quoted a number of passages from the Hymns addressed to Agni Vaishvanara. Above all Sri Aurobindo has shown that beyond a shadow of doubt the 15th and 16th verses of the Isha Upanishad which refer to the Golden Lid covering the face of the Truth are a just reproduction in the language of the Upanishads of the first Rik of the 62nd Hymn in the fifth Mandala

of the Rig Veda. Here we may add that there is hardly any among the major Upanishads which does not make a reference to the Riks or Rishis by way of authenticating their statements.

Now we conclude: our approach to the subject differs in some important respects from that of modern scholarship led by western savants and generally accepted and followed by Indian learning of modern times. Our position in regard to the character and aim of the Upanishads is fundamentally at variance with that taken by scholars in general and to some extent, in one important respect, by indigenous scholarship as well. While it is a fact we admit that the Upanishads are pre-eminently Books of Knowledge, we also hold that it is the Veda that is the source and support of the Upanishads as well as of the Brahmanas which are the Scripture for the ritualists and that it is wrong to treat the Veda, the *mantras* as part of the Karmakanda meant chiefly for the rituals and thus in practice, though not in belief and theory, inferior to the Upanishads for purposes of spiritual Wisdom. Again we hold that the Upanishads are not, in the words of Sri Aurobindo, 'philosophical speculations of the intellectual kind, a metaphysical analysis which labours to define notions, to select ideas and discriminate those that are true, to support the mind in its intellectual preferences by its dialectical reasoning'. On the contrary, they are the creation 'of a revelatory and intuitive mind and its illumined experience and all their substance, structure, phrase, imagery, movement are determined by and stamped with this original character'. Nor are they 'a revolutionary departure from the Vedic mind and its temperament and fundamental ideas, but a continuation and development and to a certain extent an enlarging transformation in the sense of bringing out into open expression all that was held covered in the symbolic Vedic speech as a mystery and a secret'.

T. V. KAPALI SAstry

## *Yoga and Life*

MAN is the highest product, so far, of nature in evolution. He has been described as the rational animal—a being who possesses, in addition to a material body and an animal vitality, a fine reasoning mind. But even this description of man is inadequate, for it leaves out of account the spiritual and supreme side of his nature. What he takes to be his self 'is an external bit of personality put forward for one brief life, for the play of the ignorance'. It is only an outer movement, a movement on the surface, brought about by the action of his lower faculties,—a half-lit mentality groping about trying to seize what it can of Truth, a blind impetuous vitality rushing about in search of happiness and satisfaction, an inert body passively receiving impacts from the environment and suffering pleasure and pain accordingly. All this surface activity constitutes what we call human life. But deep within us, and above us, resides our true self, our soul served by a subtle mind, a subtle vital and a subtle body. Here, there is a capacity for unlimited wideness, for a direct contact with Truth and for infinite Bliss. Yoga pertains to this real self of man, while what we term life pertains to his surface ego. The question we have put to ourselves in the present article is, what bearing, if any, has Yoga on man's outer life?

To this question there can be various answers. Different schools of spiritual philosophy—such as Monism, Qualified Monism and Dualism—would answer this question from their varying points of view. The Vaishnava and the Tantric would each answer according to his own outlook on life. The matter-of-fact materialist, who denies the spirit as a hallucination, and the world-shunning ascetic, in whose eyes material life is an illusion would, for once, agree and throw out our question as meaningless and untenable. The ordinary Hindu, in spite of the predominant influence of illusionism on religious thought generally, has never considered it improper to invoke divine aid for mundane purposes. In many old odes, still extant, we find the devotee praying in so many words for health, wealth, progeny and fame, and even calling upon his deity to slaughter his enemies for him. Likewise we know of so many sacrifices (Yajnas) performed, in days gone by, for specific worldly ends. The Gita has referred to these and stamped them as inferior ceremonials, 'born of action'. Nevertheless the Hindu has gone on referring all his earthly troubles to his God and seeking succour from Him. These matters are not, strictly speaking, within the scope of our enquiry. They are cited here mainly to show that the

connection between the inner spiritual and the outer material aspects of life has been looked at from widely divergent points of view. It would be impossible to deal with our subject in all its aspects within the narrow compass of a magazine article. We shall therefore restrict ourselves to Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and bring out the more salient points for the consideration of our readers. This we shall try to do largely in the Master's own language.

Sri Aurobindo has called his Yoga the Integral Yoga. It is a synthesis of the various systems that have gone before, and allows for all of them without accepting any single one to the exclusion of the others. In his "Essays on the Gita", the Master, after a cursory review of the several attempts at synthesis since the Vedic age says significantly, "We do not belong to the past dawns but to the noons of the future. A mass of new material is flowing into us; we have not only to assimilate the influences of the great theistic religions of India and of the world and a recovered sense of the meaning of Buddhism but to take full account of the potent though limited revelations of modern knowledge and seeking;...All this points to a new, a very rich, a very vast synthesis; a fresh and widely embracing harmonisation of our gains is both an intellectual and a spiritual necessity of the future". This conveys to us some idea of the marvellous synthesis, on the widest possible basis, given to us by our Master, the great Teacher of Integral Yoga. Unlike previous Yogas it does not aim at personal salvation, although such salvation is a necessary condition of it. One practises this Yoga not for one's own self, nor even for humanity, but for the Divine, and, by it, seeks to work out God's Will in this world and to bring down the supramental powers of His Consciousness into the ignorance of the mental, vital and physical nature of man. Its object is to create a divine life here on earth and to cause to descend a new Nature in the earth-consciousness. This implies a complete transformation right down to the physical, such as was sought for by only a limited few in the former Yogas, and even that as a special siddhi.)

The whole world process consists of two opposite movements. One an ascending movement and the other a movement of descent. The ascent of Matter into the Spirit is called evolution, while the descent of the Spirit into Matter is termed involution. Evolution is, according to Sri Aurobindo, entirely conditioned by involution. That is to say, if the Spirit had not come down into Matter, Matter could not climb up into the Spirit. The going up is unimaginable without the coming down. (The order of gradual evolution, as given in The Life Divine, is as follows:—Matter, Life, Psyche, Mind, Supermind, Bliss, Consciousness, Existence. The order of descent is naturally the reverse of this. Of these eight planes, Existence, Consciousness, Bliss and Supermind constitute the Parardha or the upper half, while

Mind, Psyche, Life and Matter form the Aparardha or the lower half. The relation between these two hemispheres is this, that each principle in the lower is a diminished or an inferior form of a corresponding principle in the higher. Thus, Matter is the diminished form of Existence, Life of Consciousness, Psyche of Bliss and Mind of Supermind. The negation of the Spirit by the materialist and the denial of Matter by the ascetic, both come from a failure on their part to grasp the dual fact of ascent and descent along a definite grade. Once this movement, up and down, is realised, it becomes obvious that neither the World nor the Spirit can be called a hallucination, and the ancient dictum, "Matter also is Brahman", becomes fully acceptable.

The world is described in the Gita as 'undivided, but appearing to be divided'. That is to say, it is undivided to the supramental consciousness but divided to the mental consciousness of man. Where the Mind and Supermind meet, there exists, between the two, a veil. With regard to this veil Sri Aurobindo says, "The rending of the veil is the condition of the divine life in humanity; for by that rending, the illuminating descent of the higher into the nature of the lower being and the forceful ascent of the lower being into the nature of the higher, mind can recover its divine light in the all-comprehending Supermind, the soul realise its divine self in the all-possessing, all-blissful Ananda, life repossess its divine power in the play of omnipotent Conscious-Force and matter open to its divine liberty as a form of the divine Existence."

(The marvellous transformation brought about by the descent of the Supermind into Mind and the corresponding ascent of the Mind into Supermind described by Sri Aurobindo as 'the conquest of death, an earthly immortality.' But this ascent to a higher life, we should note, does not mean a severance from our body, life, Psyche and mind; it implies merely a complete transformation, a divinisation of these principles. Here, there is no question of escape from material existence; the task of evolution is to spiritualise, to divinise it. It is possible to understand the impatience and disgust of the world-shunning ascetic; it is also possible to sympathise with his desire to break the bonds of earthly life and retire into the static silence of the Spirit. But we must understand that his view-point is narrow and one-sided, for he ignores the dynamic aspect of the Lord of creation. As Sri Aurobindo says, "Liberating ourselves from all passion and revolt, let us see what this divine order of the universe means, and, as for this great knot and tangle of Matter denying the Spirit, let us seek to find out and separate its strands so as to loosen it by a solution and not cut through it by a violence". The Vedic seer did not find the world to be a hallucination. Truth-consciousness in the human body was to him a reality. The sage of the Upanishad, too, knew the world to be real when he said, "All this is for habitation by the Lord, whatsoever

is individual universe of movement in the universal motion", and based thereon the rule of a divine life for man. That rule was the enjoyment of all by the renunciation of all, through the exclusion of desire. "By that renounced thou shouldst enjoy: lust not after any man's possession." Vedantic sayings like "Verily, all this is the Brahman", or "The world is the Brahman, nothing else", or "That thou art", or "He am I", all imply that God is one with every being and every thing that He has created.

Yoga means, literally, union or unification. In spiritual philosophy it signifies essential oneness between the individual soul and the supreme Spirit. This oneness is a perpetual state and not a condition brought about by any Yogic Siddhi. What then does Yoga do? The question has been answered already. It rends the veil between the Mind and the Supermind, and gives the sadhaka a realisation of indivisible unity. What is the outcome of this realisation? The Isha Upanishad thus describes the vision of all existences in the Self and of the Self in all existences: "He who sees everywhere the Self in all existences and all existences in the Self shrinks not thereafter from aught". Sri Aurobindo in his commentary calls this vision the foundation of perfect internal liberty and perfect joy and peace. "For by this vision, in proportion as it increases in intensity and completeness there disappears from the individual mentality *jugupsa*, that is to say all repulsion, shrinking, dislike, fear, hatred and perversions of feeling which arise from division and personal opposition to other beings or to the objectivities that surround us." If repulsion and dislike vanish, there can no longer be any room for attraction or preference either. Both attraction and repulsion gone, the sadhaka reaches a state of equality. He changes his human or egoistic view for the divine and universal view, and dwells in that realisation. The higher consciousness has then descended into him. Thenceforth he will act in the world as the Lord acts, out of a supreme Ananda and not as urged by passions and desires.

World evolution has so far traversed the four lower stages of body, life, Psyche and mind and in the ordinary course thereof will pass into the next higher stage of the supermind. Man is in the vanguard of earthly life, and it is up to him to take the leap upward. He must do it consciously and freely. Up till now evolution has proceeded under the guidance of nature acting as the executive agent of the Divine, without any conscious participation of the beings moved along by it. But rational man has attained a position of full responsibility and the next step in evolution has to be taken by his awakened and untrammelled will. In order to bring about this impending change man must collaborate with God. This collaboration is his Yoga.

Now, if at this critical stage he is negligent and slothful, or is wilfully perverse, what will happen, what will be his own fate? Sri Aurobindo has warned us that Nature will, in such a case, find a new medium and carry on

the next evolutionary step by its instrumentality. And man, the defaulter, will, like the monster reptiles of a bygone age, lie dead by the roadside, as Nature's triumph passes along. But this danger can be averted for mankind if a certain number of men would accept the Master's message in time, and make a total surrender to the Divine Mother.

Anyhow, the supramental change is bound to occur. Sri Aurobindo assures us that it is a thing decreed and inevitable in the evolution of earth-consciousness. In fact, there is no reason why the upward trend of nature should stop at man's imperfect and half-lit mentality. The object of Integral Yoga is to prepare the ground in such a way that the higher light, when it descends, might find a ready acceptance with some. It is an essential condition of our Yoga that the entire nature of a sadhaka must surrender itself, in every part and in every movement. The whole being—soul, mind, sense, heart, will, life, body—must concentrate all its powers so completely as to turn itself into an instrument fit to manifest the Divine. This is no easy task, and without Grace from above well-nigh impossible to achieve. Sri Aurobindo sets forth the aim and conception of his Yoga thus: "The Divine that we adore is not only a remote extra-cosmic Reality, but a half-veiled Manifestation present and near to us here in the universe. Life is the field of a divine manifestation not yet complete; here, in life, on earth, in the body, we have to unveil the Godhead;...Life, then, we must accept in our Yoga in order utterly to transmute it." The bearing of our Yoga on life is thus made perfectly clear. Here, on earth, the Yogi must tackle all difficulties. No shirking, no shelving, is permitted. No short-cuts are allowed. No running away from the world and its contacts. The Master had made it perfectly clear that the follower of the Integral path is not fighting his own battle only. His struggle is not a single combat but a prolonged fight on a very wide front. Even when he has vanquished his own enemies he must still fight on for others.

In the course of the sadhana the first step must always be taken by the mind. The essential preliminary consecration has to be made by the sadhaka himself. But the total self-giving, that must follow is a gradual process. For it, the sadhaka must open himself without reserve to the Divine Mother and invoke the aid of his Chaitya Purusha in order to be able to make a total submission of all parts of his being to Her. The Mother's Grace alone can bring our Yoga to fruition.

The hour for the descent of the supermind has arrived. Sri Aurobindo has seen it by his spiritual insight and given us an assurance thereof in the clearest terms possible. His presence on earth today makes this assurance doubly sure. But we have also been warned that the whole human race is not going to rise in a block to the supramental level. A few here and there, those that are fit and open, will receive the Light. They will

form so many foci from which the divine radiance will shed its lustre around, and slowly, but surely, influence the environment. Possibly, for a good long while, humanity will remain divided into two portions,—the plastic and the rigid, the regenerate and the unregenerate,—the latter growing fewer and fewer in number as time goes on, till only a handful of survivals are left over. This sort of thing happened in the past, when out of the anthropoid ape was evolved first the ape-man and then the man. The ape-man slowly died out; man, the new species in evolution, grew in number and importance; while, of the anthropoid apes, only a few survived, more or less as zoological specimens. Supermind, be it noted, is not a new faculty that is being born in man. It has been there always, dormant in the human mind. As we have noted before, the world evolution visualised by Sri Aurobindo is conditioned by the world involution. Because mind once descended out of supermind, therefore is it now going to climb up again to the supramental plane.

We quote here an extract from *The Life Divine* to wind up this all too short a study on Yoga and Life. The extract gives a short but vivid sketch of what man has achieved and what remains to be done.

"At present mankind is undergoing an evolutionary crisis in which is concealed a choice of its destiny; for a stage has been reached in which the human mind has achieved in certain directions an enormous development, while in others it stands arrested and bewildered and can no longer find its way. A structure of the external life has been raised up by man's ever-active mind and life-will, a structure of an unmanageable hugeness and complexity, for the service of his mental, vital, physical claims and urges, a complex political, social, administrative, economic, cultural machinery, an organised collective means for his intellectual, sensational, aesthetic and material satisfaction. Man has erected a system of civilisation which has become too big for his limited capacity and understanding and his still more limited spiritual and moral capacity to utilise and manage, a too dangerous servant of his blundering ego and its appetites.....Science has put at his disposal many potencies of the universal Force and has made the life of humanity materially one; but what uses this universal Force is a little human individual or communal ego with nothing universal in its light of knowledge or its movements, no inner sense or power which would create in this physical drawing together of the human world a true life unity, a mental unity or a spiritual oneness."

When man is divinely awakened he will with his supramental vision give a new turn to his whole life. All his manifold activities of today, his pursuit of art, philosophy, science and literature, his social and political organisation, his various institutions, all will acquire a divine meaning and assume a divine form. All this and much more, in fact, a full life of Love,

Light and Truth is the reward held out to humanity by Purna Yoga. In the meantime, what is necessary for the sadhaka is a never-failing aspiration, a whole-hearted dedication and a surrender without reserve to the Divine Mother in knowledge, bhakti and action. If man fails herein, his future is dire indeed. The intellectually overgrown Titan will very probably tumble down by his own weight and crush out of existence all that he has achieved so far. Indeed Life requires Yoga for its very being.

C. C. DUTT

## *Spirituality and the Modern World*

(Continued)

### III

NOT only is a new and widened consciousness, an enlargement of man's whole vision and outlook, the emergent factor of his growth and development into a higher status and being,—that which we call the spiritual man,—but the principle of such wider consciousness is also forcing itself as the dominant ideal through a growing number of modern thinkers. Unfortunately however, although the awareness is there even in its embryo, the visible signs of its appearance in modern man himself are far from manifest. In the first place, it is the individual effort and awakening that must be the basis and key to this higher growth. For, as we have traced, it is the individual soul-centre which is the very seed-potential of a new mutation and transformation. And it is the Spirit-centre within that must, even from its first obscure stirring, guide and take the lead in the whole of man's integral progress. In this, man's ego or mind-centre must increasingly be subordinated and opened to this innermost entity. Secondly, it is the basic ignorance of modern man that he lacks the very awareness of that centre within, which is the real mainspring of his higher evolution and spiritual growth. This is the primary ignorance of modern man from which all his other blindnesses and perversions spring. Firmly rooted and fixed in his egoistic centre, and dominated by the dividing mind,—with its eternal conflict of mental concepts and ideas,—he will not relinquish that habitual standpoint and action-centre which is his present status. There is not only the powerful pull of mind to retain its mastery over man, but there is also the fear in man himself of relinquishing an entity and condition he knows so well, for one which appears to be only a Vast, a Void and an Unknown.

To become conscious of his soul-entity is, then the primary need of man's higher evolution; but he must also become aware of that greater Reality of which his soul is but a part, and of which the whole movement of Universal Nature is but an outflowing Conscious Force. This is the Godhead, the Supreme and integral Reality. For while soul-awareness is the reconciling factor bridging man's endeavour towards a higher and wider consciousness with the ever-present reality of the Truth-plane above, it is God-knowledge and God-awareness that is the all-embracing, fundamental need and condition for awakening this inner Light in man to a realisation of its own true status, that of the divine nature secreted within him. It is, in fact, the Divine Himself Who is the real integrating Power, raising man from his ignorance and darkness into a luminous awareness of the divine nature in all things. The Divine alone can mould man and reconcile the triple elements in his struggle,—that of the Truth-plane above, transcendent and seemingly remote, that of the universal movement or evolutionary force, and that of the divine Immanence in man himself, his soul-entity. God alone is the Supreme and all is His, because He is not only contained in all and in each particle and movement of the universe, but He embraces all, and yet in his own supracosmic Transcendence, He is above and beyond all movement. This is the mystery of the Supreme Divine. And to become conscious of the Divine in all appearances and statuses, in all His conditions, is the one way towards knowing the entire and integral Reality. This is a primary and basic need of modern man, who has either rejected God completely, or has reduced Him to one partial manifestation of His Infinite Being,—such as all-pervading Ether, an Absolute, an Energy, Cosmic Force or Universal Spirit, the Life or Time-Spirit, Mind Principle or Universal Mind. But He is all these at once, and infinitely more.

The Supreme Reality—that whom we call God or the Absolute or, more integrally the Divine—is not only above in the high heavens, He is also here in every grain, atom and cell of the universe. It is He who is the multitudinous souls as well as the All-Soul of the universe. He is that in which everything in the universe is contained, He is the Spirit pervading all, and He is the fundamental existence of each, as the individual centre, nucleus or soul. But it is because He is eternally above all His creation,—in His own Supreme Transcendent Reality, immutable and ineffable,—that the two apparently paradoxical faces of the Divine (His divisibility into the many, immanent in each, and yet remaining always the one eternal Soul in which all is contained), are ultimately reconciled in the Person of the Supreme Godhead. It is supremely He, Who though unaffected even in His own transcendent glory, yet by His extension and separation into the universal creation of space and time, has descended into the very

depths of inert matter, the Inconscient, in order to become its very Soul and Conscious Force, and so evolve a new order, a divine order, in this terrestrial field and play. And it is He, finally, who dwells secreted in the heart of each individual.

But the separation of modern man from the wider, cosmic spiritual knowledge has certainly deprived him also of the full integral knowledge of God. As we can see, the natural source and inspiration of western man's religious knowledge, has almost entirely been from the anthropomorphic field of the Near East. Even from the time of the Patriarch Abraham, this ancient cradle of culture had already begun to develop its characteristic pattern,—an aspiration for God which was at once intense, shut-in and narrowly fanatical. From the beginning there was that yearning and intense seeking for the Personal God, who became, in their exclusive devotion, the God of the chosen people. The One God became, in effect, the God of Israel, narrow and sectarian. It was, however, during the sixth Century B.C. that this intense aspiration for God, as a personal reality to descend into their midst, reached a new height for those fanatical desert folk. This was the time of the Prophets, of whom the most outstanding, in many respects, was Isaiah. Interestingly enough that self-same period was also one of great significance in the world cultural development as a whole. It was a time when the then emerging cultures, after a phase of indrawn and separative development, blossomed forth, each revealing a Light which was later to influence the entire subsequent thought and outlook of the world. It was the period of Lao Tzu and Confucius in China, of Buddha in India, of Zoroaster in Persia, of Pythagorus in Greece, as well as of Isaiah in Palestine. Taking two of the spiritual developments of that time as our central focus—the Hebrew on one side and the Indian on the other,—we can see clearly the sharp division and even apparent opposition of two spiritual streams of thought which were later to divide the world into the characteristic Eastern and Western halves. For where one stream was subsequently to feed and nourish the whole western religious development, the other was to provide the Far East with its basic religious thought and outlook. On the one hand, centred around the inspired aspiration of the Hebrew Prophets, there was the ardent straining for some descent of the Godhead,—the yearning for His Revelation to the "chosen people",—that is, the people chosen of God, through whom He would surely reveal Himself. In those prophetic utterances of which record yet remains, the Personal God, the One God Supreme is exalted above all, and the Grace of God is exhorted. Thus Isaiah: "With my soul have I desired Thee in the night; yea with my spirit within me will I seek Thee early". Like a trumpet-blast from the hill-tops, the note is sounded, and was later to resound through the whole western religious life. Salvation for those

desert Prophets, signified the coming of the Lord God (of Israel), and the pouring of the waters of His Spirit over the earth. Without His Spirit and Grace the earth is parched and dry, and corruption reigns everywhere. It is only the cleansing waters of God's Spirit that can purify the people, fertilise the earth, and sustain righteousness over all.

On the other hand, in India, there was being expounded quite a different spiritual message. Already, after the period of the Upanishads, the unitive and intuitive illumination was breaking and spreading into diverse streams and branches. One of the strongest of these branches, and one which occupied the central focus of Indian spirituality for a number of centuries, was the enlightened message of Buddha. His was the austere teaching of the solitary and individual endeavour. It was the heroic call of man to the scaling of the bare bleak heights of the Spirit to reach the unchanging Transcendent. Self-discipline, self-purification and right action, were the sovereign means whereby this courageous effort could be accomplished. And how compelling was the goal of Nirvana which meant individual release from that interminable round of misery, suffering and bondage! It is little wonder that the calm, peace and contemplative stillness of this enlightened Way drew together its multitude of adherents. But it was fundamentally the teaching of individual salvation,—showing man the way towards an utter extinction of his own egoistic personality, and his total absorption and annihilation in the stillness of the Absolute,—and for this reason it was a contradiction of any purpose in the universal movement and change, as well as a negation of any meaning in man's existence in this terrestrial life. And without meaning and purpose, the whole of his worldly life became one grand Illusion. This world-negating outlook formed the very basis and foundation of what grew into the characteristic thought and mode of life of the East.

Thus we see the beginnings of those distinctive and separative developments which were to divide the whole cultural world into two halves, with that seemingly unbridgeable gulf between. But it is abundantly clear that beneath all this division and separation there yet remained the indivisibility of the Integral Divine and of His working here in the whole of this terrestrial movement. For the anthropomorphic God of the Hebrews, and the unchanging Transcendence of Buddha, are not two separate and irreconcilable faces, as they appear to be, but two sides or aspects of the self-same Reality; since the Divine embraces both God the Person, and God the Immutable Transcendent in His true integral Wholeness.

Although Buddhism had spread its influence over a wider field outside India than any other Indian spiritual branch, there was preserved within India herself the latent deposit of an ancient dynamic spirituality. In the long history of India's spiritual growth, the Buddhistic outlook and teaching was but a partial vision, one limb which had outgrown itself and which

subsequently became a separate force, though still leaving its cast on the whole thought-development of India. Yet in spite of that world-negating outlook there persisted in the very heart of her culture, the Word and the Truth-seed of her ancient Seers. Perhaps more than any other scripture it was the Gita which preserved in the very hearts of the people the true living reality of the Supreme. It was this wide and all-embracing vision of the Divine which became the very core of Indian culture, uplifting it and bearing it through all its decadence and outer decay. In order to see the hidden message and comprehensive vision of God as it has been preserved in this ancient revelation, let us briefly examine that teaching as it has been presented to us in its modern form by Sri Aurobindo in "Essays on the Gita". First of all we have the cosmic revelation of all existence as a divine movement opening out from God and returning to God. In this movement, Nature is but a power of the Divine which works out the consciousness and will of the divine soul that dwells within her. Thus from the very outset there is no absolute duality of Spirit and Nature (though it appears so at first to our ordinary awareness of things). The spirit is the Supreme in His infinite consciousness, and the supreme Nature is the infinity of power of the Spirit. But even within this largest and widest cosmic movement, the supreme Nature has formulated itself as the individual soul-centre, in order to provide the spiritual basis for the manifold universal becoming. In this way the individual soul, atom or nucleus is the basis of the multiple existence. It is because the soul is the very stuff of this divine Nature, that it ever seeks to go back to that higher law of being in which it can discover the will, the power, the dynamic principle and highest working of its own divine nature.

Secondly we must also realise that the true and supreme spiritual nature of the Divine is not imprisoned in the forms of the lower nature; rather are these latter merely phenomena in His being. Thus we may feel the soul to be in the body and so a derivative of it, but in actuality the body is in the soul and a result of the soul. It is the lower nature which falsifies values and inverts truth itself. It is only in the higher cosmic vision that we can become aware of the three powers or statuses of the Divine,—the Supreme, the Spirit and the Soul,—in which the Supreme is not only remote from us in some transcendent status beyond, but he is here too in the body of every being, in the very heart of man and in Nature. Only in our first realisation and approach to the Divine Reality do we experience the difficulty of reconciling the impersonal with the personal, and the omnipotent soul with mechanical Nature. This is because our approach is with and through the mind or intellect. Thus one has to grow into the Highest and become It, in order to really know. It is then that at each step a new aspect or experience of the Divine is revealed to us. In this

way we discover that mechanical nature is but a lower truth of the Supreme Reality; there is a higher truth which is the spiritual, and which is also the nature of our own soul personality. But beyond our first conceptions and progressive experience of the Divine, the Gita points to another revealing spiritual experience in which we are forced to see as the very Divine all things, not only that Spirit which dwells immutable in the universe and its countless creations, but all this inward and outward becoming. All is then a Divine Reality. And even then, Cosmos is not the Divine in all His utter Reality, but a single self-expression. For the Divine is something greater than the universal existence. It is only, finally, in the integral Divine Himself that each status or mode is reconciled and seen as infinite parts of one whole.

Even in the light of this wide and all-embracing God-knowledge, where the very existence of man would seem to be an insignificant consequence, the Gita's teaching never loses its hold on the significance for the individual which this knowledge reveals. It is only by seeing the outer form and aspect of Reality that man's mind is bewildered and loses its bearings. The very first step in his own integral progress must inevitably be to turn from the outward to the inner,—to the divine Reality itself. Once the secret and inner Godhead is known and embraced, the whole being and the whole life will undergo a sovereign uplifting and a marvellous transmutation. "The great form of God" says Sri Krishna, "can be seen, known and entered into only by that Love which regards, adores and loves Him alone in all things". For the Divine is no mere metaphysical concept, however lofty it might be, but a living Reality which dwells even in the heart of man himself,—an ever-present Reality to which man can always turn with the uttermost surrender of all his being. It is here in the Gita that "this greatest reconciling Oneness of all aspects of the Divinity are manifested; the transcendent, universal and individual Godhead, Spirit and Nature, Infinite and finite, space and time and timelessness, Being and Becoming, all that we can strive to think and know of the Godhead whether of the absolute or the manifested existence are wonderfully revealed in an ineffable oneness". (Sri Aurobindo in "Essays on the Gita"). Such is the Gita's illumined vision of God which stands even to-day as the most fundamental basis of man's knowledge of God and the Integral Reality.

We have already seen how the separation of East and West had arisen from the divergence of two central spiritual streams, which were not really opposed to each other in any absolute sense, but which were rather complementary, though each preserved its own line of endeavour to the exclusion and oblivion of the other. In one, being essentially the aspiration for the descent of the Godhead on earth, the aim was in its widest and most catholic expression more towards a salvation for the world. In the

other, it was the quest for individual ascent into the heights of the Transcendence, and hence its aim was always turned away from earth, towards the liberation of each individual through his own self-enlightenment. It is thus clear that one partial truth without the other would sooner or later tend towards an unbalance and disharmony. For the exclusive stress on a universal descent without the accompanying means for the individual growth (which happened in the West), was sooner or later to precipitate Western man wholly in the materialistic way of life,—losing the central inner core of Reality and regarding only the outer or surface as the whole reality. In the same way an all-too exclusive preoccupation with individual ascent (as it occurred in the East) was to completely disregard the world of humanity, its life and material condition, its pain, suffering and evil. But since the goal of the universal movement, as we realise from the integral spiritual Truth, is for the world and humanity as a whole through the individual, there had to be the attempts towards an integration of these two apparently separate ways. In the past, there have in fact been brief though powerful phases of fusion and coming together. One coalescence was the absorption of Indian and Buddhistic influences of thought by certain Near Eastern sects, notably the Essenes (though there were many others between the Tigris and the Nile valleys). Later there was the attempt towards a wider fusion when Jewish and Indian mysticism combined with Greek intellectuality to bring about some intellectual and tangible basis to the new religious movement whose spiritual birth had sprung largely from the earlier coalescence. But these were, radically, only partial and tentative fusions, and not integral in the widest spiritual sense, though of course their effect for the whole western world was of supreme consequence. Even though it was almost global in its wide sweep over the earth, the religious movement which had sprung from that fusion, had not fundamentally assimilated the wider cosmic or supracosmic vision which was the essential root of Indian spirituality. In the first place only a part of India's rich store of spirituality had been given to the world, for India was as yet withholding her real essential knowledge,—that of the dynamic Reality. The spiritual message which India had given to the world in Buddhism was only a partial aspect of the integral Truth,—the negative complement of her more positive and dynamic Spirit. And also it is now apparent that the world was not yet ready to receive that full and integral spirituality. It is only, perhaps, in this present age of world-wide communication and global interrelation that we see the greater possibility for the One World to really emerge. The very re-appearance in this modern age of India's ancient spirituality in its living and dynamic expression, is a further indication that the wider attempt towards world unity and integration is actually being made. For even behind all the present wide-spread upheaval and disruption, there

is the deeper movement towards a human unity and enlightenment. And in spite of all disaster and human suffering, the hand of the Divine Himself is slowly but surely turning and leading man towards a realisation of his own essential unity,—but a realisation that must necessarily spring from a wider consciousness. And this implies man's own individual effort..

In the West the development and stress on the physical basis of life has been, in spite of the grave danger of its excess, a necessary and significant phase in the evolution of man,—for it represents the lowest and deepest permeation of mind, through man, into the depths of matter, even to its very atomic soul. But as we can see, in its lowest and innermost movement, mind is not the surest or most powerful instrument for that penetration into life and matter, nor is mind the end of the terrestrial evolution. It must finally be the very stuff of Soul which has to emerge, penetrate into and take possession of the earth-life itself. This can only be achieved both through the individual, wherein the Spirit lies hidden and secreted, and from above where the universal Soul is still as yet veiled to man. Hence this, the Soul's growth and opening to the Divine is the true beginning.

N. PEARSON

*To believe that one is being constantly guided by the Divine in the heart is not necessarily surrender. It is necessary to be detached, to see what are the divine forces and undivine and to reject the undivine forces. It is only by this discrimination that one can make a true surrender to the Divine in the heart.*

*Sri Aurobindo*

## *Review*

**Selections from the Writings and Speeches of Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar.** Vol. I & II. Edited by P. G. Sahasranama Iyer, M. A., Trivandrum.

India is on the threshold of independence or, as Sir S. Radhakrishnan remarked the other day, India is now practically independent. Indians, who have been so long governed by others, have now to govern themselves and must rise to the height of the occasion. On account of long subjection as well as faulty education, the average Indian has not the habit of thinking deeply or seriously, he has left all the thinking to be done for himself by a few top-ranking leaders. "Our life and our conversation are hollow and ineffectual. Surface meets surface, as Thoreau asserts in his famous Essay on Life Without Principle. Journalism, the Wireless, the Gramophone and the Cinema symbolise the pace at which things now move which in turn has led to the habit of surveying only the headlines of life and to what has been aptly described as the macadamisation of mind, its foundation being broken into fragments for the wheels of present-day civilization to travel over." Yet India was the land of philosophers; nowhere else in the world the human mind has made such great adventures and so sounded the depths and scaled the heights of existence. Even a cursory study of the systems of Indian thought itself would be a great remedy for this disease of superficial thinking, and unless the average Indian learns to think for himself seriously on all the affairs of life, there is no hope of a true democracy growing up in the country. But philosophy today seems to be the most unpopular subject in India; as there is some interest in political and economical matters, these subjects should be studied more deeply than is possible only by reading the morning papers. For such a study the present collection of the writings and speeches of Sir C. P. Ramaswamy would be eminently helpful. All subjects of vital practical interest to present-day India have been dealt with in a style which combines lucidity with depth and with an outlook which is eminently Indian, and not a mere imitation of the West which is so very common even among the foremost of our present leaders. Unlike many others he does not feel called upon to make an apology for his being a Hindu or his professing himself to be one. And this, though he knows what the idea in Europe about the Hindu is, "an indolent, mysterious and impracticable person unfit for the battle and controversies of the world, fit to be pitied or at the best patted on the back, but not specially useful to himself or to the world." His delineation of the nature of culture and the defence of Hindu culture is particularly useful at this time when even educated Indians have crude ideas about it. To the question, what are the essentials of Hindu culture, he replies: "The first trait characteristic of Hindu culture is, according to me, courage and self-reliance. There was nothing, no domain of thought, no impossibility, no supernatural barrier, no natural obstacle, that stood in the way of the Indian people penetrating into the arena of the Unseen and Unknown."

Those of us who remember the Kathopanishad know that when Nachiketas was sent away from his father's house and asked to repair to the domain of Yama he went thither. Yama was pleased with him and wanted him to choose three boons, Nachiketas asked the third boon in this famous verse: "There is speculation among men as to whether, after death, the soul exists or does not exist. This I should like to know." Yama did not want to confer this boon as it meant the disclosure or revelation of the knowledge of the Omniscient and Omnipresent. So he attempted to side-track Nachiketas from this quest and offered him, as alternatives, progeny, cattle, elephants, horses, gold, empire, longevity, etc. But the boy was not to be easily turned away from his pursuit and he insisted: "Tell me, Yama, what it is they inquire into as to the great question concerning the next world. I want no other boon but the privilege of learning the secret knowledge." Realising that he had a student who was in deadly earnest, he unfolded to him the true nature of the Soul and Over-Soul. Nachiketas is a type of the dauntless and eternal Hindu search for the ultimate.

The Hindus did not take God for granted. That has been one of the characteristics of Hindu philosophy and the Hindu doctrine of life. They wanted each man to be the witness of truth as it was revealed by personal experiences to each man. This is what Yoga attempts to achieve. Another characteristic of Hindu culture is that it is able to comprehend within itself the worshipper of a stone image and the worshipper of the Shuddha Advaita. Remember what Lord Krishna says in the Gita: "They who worship other deities, with faith and devotion, in reality worship Me." On a survey of Hindu thought we shall find—whether the approach be through pantheism, polytheism or even atheism—that there is nothing that cannot be comprehended in the synthesis which we dare to call Hindu Culture. This courage in grappling with all problems and this conscious synthesis are two predominant characteristics of the Hindu Culture. Sir Ramaswamy mentions a third. "Throughout Indian art, literature and Indian life, there is an abiding consciousness of the Infinite, and the immanence of the Divine in small things as well as great. This, to my mind, is a special characteristic of Hindu Culture. To illustrate this, let me deliberately choose two subjects like mathematics and grammar—most apparently distant from what may be called culture in the aesthetic sense. Most of us have been painful sufferers from the rules of grammar; some of us habitually break those rules; others endeavour not to do so, with results not entirely successful. But grammar as understood in most countries has always been regarded only as an instrument, a humble, necessary but not inseparable adjunct of culture. It is in India alone that Patanjali and those who followed him thought and spoke of the worship of the Shabda Brahma as "Shabdabrahmopasanam". They have sought to analyse every sound. Each word, each sound, has a life-history of its own, linked up with the science of the *nadabrahma*, the Supreme manifested as sound or Logos."

As the first landmark of Hindu Culture, he points to the Rig Veda which comprises the beginnings of all subsequent speculation on the unity of life and the immanence of the Divine in all that is. "There is only One that exists. Learned men speak of it differently." The Rig Veda exemplifies what the Gita later on stresses, namely, that the life spiritual and the life in the world are not antagonistic but mutually complementary and supple-

mentary. Hindu Culture appreciated the differences among men social, tribal, cultural, hereditary and otherwise, but also gives chance for everybody to progress from stage to stage towards the ultimate goal of liberation. Those persons also mislead who seek to justify the excrescences of the caste system as it exists today, merely because there was an original fourfold classification of men according to *karma* and *guna* and Sir Ramaswamy boldly asserts that caste is not part of the true Hindu spirit or of Hindu culture.

Our leaders are now busy framing a constitution for India. It seems to be taken for granted that India must have some form of the Parliamentary system. But India has her own genius in politics, and we are quite sure that the Parliamentary form of democracy will not be suitable to India, however useful it may be as a temporary or transitional device. Sir Ramaswamy also has expressed the same sentiment and given the warning. He says: "The ideas and ideals of each country as they progress from age to age have, and indeed ought to have, something racy in them and that in politics as well as in literature and the arts, nothing that is not evolved from within and is not in harmony with inherited as well as individual traditions will be characteristic or essentially fit to live. Today we are producing and putting to practical use new constitutions. New thoughts are thundering at our doors and while we shall do well, as throughout our history, ever to be tolerant and hospitable to fresh views, nevertheless, we must also be alive to the need for assimilating them with our own culture and we may as well imitate the wise gardener when for improving the yield, he skilfully inserts a graft." And a practical philosopher and statesman as he is, he has not rested by merely expressing a sentiment but has brought together in short compass some of the multifrom theories that have been adumbrated in our country during many centuries.

It is gratifying to remember that though India has been under foreign rule for a long time—indeed almost all countries in the world have had to pass through this ordeal which seems to have been a necessary evil—almost one-third of India has always been self-governing and has retained something of her ancient regime. In his lectures on Progressive Travancore we see much of the inner working of a native State. We shall refer here only to two subjects out of the many with which Sir Ramaswamy deals with his characteristic insight and practical wisdom. He is not blind to the failures and the shortcomings. Thus referring to the Co-operative Movement he says it has been a failure in Travancore as indeed it has been, on the whole, a failure in the rest of India; and he has analysed the causes of the failure and suggested the remedies as he is convinced that it is only through the Co-operative Movement that post-war reconstruction and agricultural rehabilitation is possible. In order to succeed, the movement must be inspired by the true spirit of co-operation and not by selfish motives or the profit-making spirit. Referring to the movement in the past in Travancore he says, "in short it became a pestiferous organisation, which was ruining village-life instead of being an elevating factor of village-life. We have resolutely to look into the causes of this disease and cure it. It can only be done in one way. Whether in the process of production or of marketing or some other disposal, it can only be done by the uprush of a missionary spirit." "For many years all of us were repeating parrot cries that we should start a dairy movement as in Denmark or some other co-operative scheme as in Germany

and so forth. But the Co-operative Movement should have started in the direction of re-vivifying the old village-community in which each man knew his neighbour, knew his transactions, had the right and the opportunity to set the other man on the proper track and was a kind of moral and financial censor. The village-community has decayed; and it should have been the objective of the Co-operative Movement to revive it in small localities. In big localities, the methods of big business might become necessary."

The other subject to which we want to refer is temple entry. Now-a-days we often hear that some temple or other in South India has been opened to the Harijans. The honour of being the pioneer in this matter, as also in the matter of abolishing the capital sentence, must go to the Travancore State. Speaking on the occasion of the Temple Entry Proclamation Day, on 12th November 1944, he justified the act by expounding the fundamentals of Hindu Faith.

Summing up his argument in favour of temple entry he holds that the Temple Entry Proclamation will not have served its purpose fully, unless it emphasises the following points: Firstly, the universality and catholicity of the Hindu faith, secondly, the necessity, as far as possible, for Hindus to hold to that faith unless and until a personal and irresistible call comes to them to embrace any other form of religion, be it Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity, Islam or Zoroastrianism; thirdly, the recognition that we have been ill-treating and placing wrongful disabilities on a great mass of the population of the country, and finally the devising of ways and means for the purpose of pulling these masses out of the slough of despondency and securing them that redemption without which we ourselves shall never be redeemed. This work is not to be undertaken, because the Scheduled Castes are threatening reprisals unless they are guaranteed appointments under Government proportionate to their population and irrespectively of their present qualifications. That should not be the line of action. It has been asserted that blood will be shed unless a certain number of jobs are bestowed; such threats take us nowhere. But it must be granted that we have erred grievously, and one of the fundamental and inevitable results of the Temple Entry Proclamation is to make an acknowledgment and adequate atonement to those whom we have injured, whom we have slighted, whom we have kept down and ignored through many centuries.

In this connection he referred to the activities of other religions in relation to the depressed classes in India. He said: "What has been done by this State, what has been done by Hindu Rulers in the whole of India, has been to tolerate and allow everyone to preach and hold his faith. There has been no great religious persecution in India initiated by the followers of the Hindu faith after the Buddhistic period and, God willing, there will be none to the end of time. But it is not right or just on the part of any ecclesiastical dignitaries or personages to prevent other faiths from embarking on the same proselytising policy as they themselves follow. If theirs is a converting religion, ours by reaction will inevitably be a converting or rather a re-converting religion. If they will make conversion a personal and individual act arising from a personal message or inspiration, we shall not quarrel. But if they resort to mass conversions, Hindus will and must organise for mass re-conversions on the same basis and subject to the same conditions. I shall now conclude. We have met here to

commemorate a great historic and spiritual event. India is torn by warring factions political, social, economic, and religious. If anything sheds a ray of hope in the midst of the darkness, it is this beacon light of our faith extending to and embracing all the universe, granting succour and solace to every soul, in every state of evolution, denying no form of revelation and welcoming all modes of approach to the Divine. I am full of hope. There are discernible amidst all our quarrels the signs of a new spirit and uprush of the soul throughout this great land of ours."

The speech on *Post-War Reconstruction* is, as the Editor says, characteristic of Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar's boldness in pointing out the evils of over-accentuated Provincial Autonomy when All-India problems have to be faced squarely, and in putting forward an ardent plea for a unified Central Government able enough and strong enough to adopt measures embracing All-India problems. He gives illustrations. "Take the food problem in so far as it appertains to the part of the country from which I come. Travancore is at the very end of India and we are getting our food from the Persian Gulf—barley from the Persian Gulf, rice from Sind, rice and other grains from Bahawalpur, rice from Kashmere, millets from the United Provinces and a certain amount of foodstuff from Orissa. One would have thought that it would be possible for the Central Government to have so arranged matters both from the point of view of convenient transport and otherwise that Kashmere and Bahawalpur sent their surpluses to the United provinces, the United Provinces sent their surpluses to the Central Provinces, the Central Provinces to Madras and Madras to Travancore. That has not been done and, I think, that has not been done because there is not enough appreciation in the country at large, in the various provincial centres and amongst the people taken as a whole and even in the cases of Governments which are dealing with the matter, of the importance of co-ordinated activity.... And I am saying it as a person who here represents an Indian State. At another place, the representative of a prominent Indian State expressed an apprehension that there might be some curtailment of the sovereignty and the integrity of the State administration if the Central Government took upon itself too meticulous and too sustained a control over such things as the supply of electrical power, irrigation and so forth. My answer then was, and my answer now will be, that in the urgent situation in which we are placed today, if an Indian State notwithstanding its heritage of sovereignty is going to be irreconcilable, is going to act not in consonance with but antagonistically to the welfare and the progress of India as a whole, that Indian State or those Indian States do not deserve to exist.

"This is true not only of Indian States but of Provinces also. I would without hesitation say that it is the part and lot and elementary duty of Indian States, and the part and lot of British India to work together, to reconcile themselves to the Central control in all All-India policies, apart from local and State policies and governance. Let there be representation of Indian States, if you please; let them have the fullest say as to the formulation of policy; let them have a chance of putting forward their views, but having done so let them agree to a Central control and Central laying down of the policy."

A. B.

## Latest Publications

### By Sri Aurobindo

						Rs. As.
HYMNS TO THE MYSTIC FIRE	...	...	...	...	...	5 0
POEMS PAST AND PRESENT	...	...	...	...	...	1 4
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIAN ART	...	...	...	...	...	1 8
HERACLITUS ( <i>Reprint</i> )	...	...	...	...	...	1 4
SPIRIT AND FORM OF INDIAN POLITY (In the press)						
SAVITRI: A legend and a Symbol						
,, Book I Canto I	...	...	...	...	...	4 0
,, II „ I	...	...	...	...	...	1 0
,, III „ I	...	...	...	...	...	1 0
,, III „ II	...	...	...	...	...	1 0
,, III „ III	...	...	...	...	...	1 0

### By The Mother

WORDS OF LONG AGO	...	...	...	...	1 8
PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS. A complete translation from the original in French. (In preparation)					

### By Anilbaran Roy

THE MESSAGE OF THE GITA. As interpreted by Sri Aurobindo.		10 0
SONGS FROM THE SOUL ( <i>Reprint</i> )	...	2 0
THE WORLD CRISIS: Sri Aurobindo's Vision of the Future	...	1 12

### By Pavitra and G. Monod-Herzen

THE MESSAGE OF SRI AUROBINDO AND HIS ASHRAM. (with photographs)	2	8
Do	Do	(in French) 2 8

### By Sisirkumar Mitra

CULTURAL FELLOWSHIP OF BENGAL	...	...	...	2 4
THE FUTURE OF INDIA	...	...	...	0 10
SRI AUROBINDO : A HOMAGE. (with a Foreword by Prof. Tan Yun-Shan)	...	...	...	0 6
THE VISION OF INDIA (to be ready shortly)				

Vol. IV. No. 3

August 1947



The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. - - - - Sri Aurobindo.

## *Evolution of the Spiritual Consciousness*

EVEN the Vedic Rishis used to refer to the ancients, more ancient than they themselves. "The ancients", they said, "worshipped Agni, we too the moderns in our turn worship the same godhead". Or again, "Thus spoke our forefathers"; or, "So have we heard from those who have gone before us" and so on.

Indeed, the tradition in the domain of spiritual discipline seems to have been always to realise once again what has already been realised by others, to rediscover what has already been discovered, to re-establish ancient truths. Others have gone before on the Path, we have only to follow. The teaching, the realisation is handed down uninterruptedly through millenniums from Master to disciple. In other words, the idea is that the fundamental spiritual realisation remains the same always and everywhere: the name and the form only vary according to the age and the surroundings. The one reality is called variously, says the Veda. Who can say when was the first dawn! The present dawn has followed the track of the infinite series that has gone by and is the first of the infinite series that is to come. So sings Rishi Kanwa. For the core of spiritual realisation is to possess the consciousness, attain the status of the Spirit. This Spirit may be called God by the theist or Nihil by the Negativist or Brahman (the One) by the Positivist (spiritual). But the essential experience, of a cosmic and transcendental reality, does not differ very much. So it is declared that there is only one goal and aim, and there are, at the most, certain broad principles, clear pathways which one has to follow if one is to move in the right direction, advance smoothly and attain infallibly: but these have been well marked out, surveyed and charted and do not admit of serious alterations.

and deviations. The spiritual aspiration is a very definite and unitary movement and its fulfilment is also a definite and invariable status of the consciousness. The spiritual is a typal domain, one may say, there is no room here for sudden unforeseen variation or growth or evolution.

Is it so in fact? For if one admits and accepts the evolutionary character of human nature and consciousness, the outlook becomes somewhat different. According to this view, human civilisation is seen as moving through progressive stages: man at the outset was centrally lodged in and occupied with his body consciousness, he was an *annamaya purusha*; then he raised himself and centred in the vital consciousness and so became fundamentally a *pranamaya purusha*; next he climbed into the mental consciousness and became the *manomaya purusha*; from that level again he has been attempting to go further beyond. On each plane the normal life is planned according to the central character, the law—*dharma*—of that plane. One can have the religious or spiritual experience on each of these planes, representing various degrees of growth and evolution according to the plane to which it is attached. It is therefore that the Tantra refers to three gradations of spiritual seekers and accordingly three types or lines of spiritual discipline: the animal (*pashu bhava*), the heroic (*vira bhava*) and the godly or divine (*deva bhava*). The classification is not merely typal but also hierarchical and evolutionary in character.

The Divine or the spiritual consciousness, instead of being a simple unitary entity, is a vast, complex stratified reality. "There are many chambers in my Father's mansion", says the Bible: many chambers on many stories, one may add. Also there are different levels or approaches that serve different seekers, each with his own starting-point, his *point de repère*. When one speaks of union with the Divine or of entering into the spiritual consciousness, one does not refer to the same identical truth or reality as any other. There is a physical Divine, a vital Divine, a mental Divine; and beyond the mind—from where one may consider that the region of true spirit begins—there are other innumerable modes, aspects, manifestations of the Divine.

As we say, there are not only aspects of the Divine, but there are also levels in him. The spiritual consciousness rises tier upon tier and each spur has its own view and outlook, rhythm and character. Now, as long as man was chiefly preoccupied with his physico-vital or mentalised physico-vital activities, as long as the burden of his body and life and even mind lay heavy on him and their gravitational pull was normally very strong, almost irresistible, the spiritual impulse in him acted generally and fundamentally as a movement of escape from them into *some* thing beyond. It was a negative movement on the whole and it was enough to dissociate, reject, sublimate the lower status and somehow rise into something which is

not that (*neti*): the question was not important at that stage of the human consciousness about a scientific scrutiny of the Beyond, its precise constitution and composition.

But once there is the possibility gained of a more normalised, familiar and wider reconnaissance of the Beyond, when the human being has been mentalised to a degree and in a manner that makes it inevitable for him to overpass to a higher status and live there habitually, then it becomes an urgent matter of concern to know and find out where one goes exactly, on which level and in what domain, once one is beyond. The question, it is true, engaged the attention of the ancients too; but it was more or less an interesting enquiry, a good part speculative and theoretical; it had not the reality and insistence of the need of the hour. We have today chalked out an almost exhaustive science of the inferior consciousness, of the lower hemisphere—of course, so far as it is possible for such a science to be exhaustive moving in the light of the partial and inferior consciousness. In the same way we need at the present hour a complete and precise science of the Divine Consciousness. As there is a logic of the finite, there is also a logic of the infinite, not merely its magic, and that too has to be discovered and laid out.

Thus, the highest and most comprehensive description of the Divine is perhaps the formula Sat-chit-ananda. But even so, it is a very general and, after all, an inadequate description. It has to be filled in and supplemented by other categories as well, if one may say so. For Sat-chit-ananda presents to us the Sat Brahman. There is also the Asat Brahman. And again we must accept a reality which is neither Sat nor Asat—*nasadāśīmo sadāśit*, says the Veda. And as for the filling up of the details in an otherwise almost blank and featureless infinity, Sri Aurobindo's charting of that vast unknown—with the categories of the Supermind and its various levels, of the Overmind and its levels too, all forming the Divine Status and Consciousness—is a new, almost a revolutionary revelation, just the required science which the present world needs and demands and for which it has been prepared through all the cycles of evolution.

This means to say that with the knowledge that is given us today one can determine more or less definitely the altitudes to which the various spiritual realisations of the past rose and one can see also the degrees or graded stages of the evolution of the spiritual consciousness. A broad landmark can be noted here which concerns us at the present moment. The spiritual consciousness has been rising to higher and higher peaks and possessing them one after another. At the present moment we are at a crisis, at a crucial crossing. The spiritual consciousness attained till now and securely held in human possession (in man's inner nature) is confined to the highest level of the mind with some infiltration from the Overmind and through that,

as a springing board, a leap into an indefinite, almost a blank Beyond. Now the time is come and the conditions are ready for the spiritual consciousness in humanity to arrive at the status above the Overmind, the Supermind, and make that a living reality and build in and through that its normal consciousness.

A progressive revelation of higher and higher and more integral states of the spiritual consciousness in and through the realisations of mystics and sages and seers—divine men—of all ages, such is the process of evolution that marks the life of man upon earth. This spiritual evolution, however, may not be obviously visible in the external life and character of man: it has been a phenomenon more in his inner being and consciousness, an occult phenomenon. Hence there has intervened a veil, a wall of separation between the two. The veil has not been rent precisely because the very highest spiritual potential has not been reached and brought into play. The call of the present age is just to do away with this veil, make of human nature a unified, a streamlined entity, a complete incarnation of the spiritual consciousness in the fullness of its own nature at its source and origin.

### *At the Origin of Ignorance\**

The Divine Consciousness, basically and essentially one and unique, has inherent in it four cardinal attributes—principles of its modulation, modes of its vibration—developing into or appearing as four aspects and personalities. They are Light, Force, Delight and Knowledge. Originally and in the supreme status the four movements are one and indivisible and form one indissoluble identity with the Divine's pure essence and absolute unity. The differentiation or variability there in the Immutable is a play immanent in the integral self-nature of the Supreme. The one and the many form on that level a single entity, an undivided whole: the unity running in and through and holding the multiplicity and the multiplicity being the playfulness of the unity. Multiplicity however implies freedom of movement in the Unique. In other words the very character of variability is the absolute freedom of the variables; the play consists precisely in the free choice and self-determination of the partners, the differentiated units. For a formation in the Divine Consciousness, an individualised formulation of its being must necessarily have the Divine's own freedom. Now, the result of this freedom is somewhat unexpected, to put it in the human way, that is to say, it was not explicit at that point, in that field of consciousness. For the freedom,

\* Based on a talk with the Mother.

in the mormal course of its play, reached a degree or arrived at a mode which brought about a shift and an impulsion meaning a rift and a clear separation: the momentum of the free movement carried the individual formation beyond the range of its sense of unity and identity with all and the One. More and more it isolated itself, limiting itself to its own orbit and to its own fund of energy. This isolation, it must be noted, occurs at the origin without any sense of perversity or revolt or disobedience on the part of the free entity, as the legend formulated by the human mind imaged it. The movement of freedom and individual formation in its urge crosses, as it were, a borderline, passes from the safe zone within the Divine's own status into a different zone, creates it, as a matter of fact, by that overzealous and self-concentrated free movement. But, as I have said, there is no premeditation or *arrière pensée* or "bad will" or spirit of contradiction there at the origin of the deviation. It is no original sin: it is a spontaneous, almost a logical consequence, an inevitable expression of the freedom that particulars enjoy as part and parcel of the Divine Universal.

And yet the result is strange and revolutionary. The game once begun develops its own scheme and pattern and modality. For that crucial step in the movement of freedom, that definite moving away, the assertion of complete independence and isolation immediately brought about a reversal of realities, a complete negation of the original attributes. Thus Light became obscurity or Inconscience, Life became death, Delight became pain and suffering, Power became incapacity, Knowledge became Ignorance, and Truth became falsehood. In other words, Spirit became forthright Matter.

What seemed, however, to be nothing more than an accident is pregnant nevertheless with a profound meaning and significance. Indeed God has not created the world in fun. Spirit became Matter, that is to say, an apparent negation of the Spirit, to demonstrate that the negation is a way of affirmation, a more integral way of affirmation of the Spirit. Matter has been brought out to express another poise of the spirit, spirit concretised and embodied.

### *The Soul of a Nation\**

A nation is a living personality; it has a soul, even like a human individual. The soul of a nation is also a *psychic* being, that is to say, a conscious being, a formation out of the Divine Consciousness and in direct contact with it, a power and aspect of Mahashakti. A nation is not merely the sum total of

\* Based on a talk with the Mother.

the individuals that compose it, but a collective personality of which the individuals are as it were cells, like the cells of a living and conscious organism. The psychic being or soul of a nation is indeed conscious; it knows its *raison d'être*, its life purpose, its destiny, the role it has to play in the Divine scheme as the Divine instrument. And its will—for it has a will, the expression of its consciousness, the Divine's impulse in and through it—is inevitable, sooner or later it will fulfil itself. Even like the soul of a man, the nation's soul is behind all the movements that form its external life, supporting, building, guiding its political, economic, social or cultural make-up. The individual can know of and come in contact with the nation's soul in and through his own soul. When one becomes conscious of his psychic being then only one is in a condition to be conscious of the psychic being of the collective person of his nation or the nation with which he has inner affinity.

There are periods in the life cycle of a nation, critical moments, when it is in deadly peril, when its very existence is threatened, attacked by enemy forces either from within or from without. Such was the case when, for example, Britain was invaded by the Spanish Armada or when France was being subjugated by England. Those were very anxious times, but in each instance the soul of the nation came forward and inspired the nation to react and go through the ordeal and survive. Jeanne Darc may be considered as the embodiment of France's national soul, as on a still earlier occasion that same soul embodied in St. Geneviève. But a nation may fall on much more evil days, namely, when it loses contact with its very soul and goes astray, its life movement taking a wrong curve. A nation can deny its soul, even as an individual may and the result is disaster. Germany is a terrible example of such a tragedy in our own day.

India is offering a spectacle of another tragedy. What is happening here is the attack of a disease that is convulsing the body politic: it seems to be a cancerous disease, the limbs seeking to grow independently at the expense of each other. The patient is passing through a very critical period and it is indeed a question of life and death. But we hope—we are sure—that the soul of this ancient nation will assert itself and through whatever vicissitudes re-establish health and harmony: for that soul's mission is yet to be done.

Like the individual a nation too dies. Ancient Greece and Rome, Egypt and Babylon and Chaldea are no more. What has happened to their souls, it may be asked. Well, what happens to the soul of the individual when the body falls away? The soul returns to the soul-world. Like the individual Psyche the collective Psyche too goes and retires into the womb of peace and light with all its treasures, its beauty and glory gathered in, like a bird that goes to sleep within its folded wings. What the Greek culture and civilization as still continues to exist in its quintessential reality in a world to

which one has access if one has the requisite kinship of consciousness and psychic opening. That soul lives in its own domain, with all the glory of its achievement and realisation at their purest; and from there it sheds its lustre, exerts its influence, acts as a living leaven in the world's cultural heritage and spiritual growth.

When however the soul withdraws, when a nation in a particular cycle or its soul manifestation has fulfilled its role and mission, the body of the nation falls gradually into decadence. The elements that composed the organic reality, the living consistency of national life disintegrate, lose their energy and cohesive capacity; they die out and are dispersed or persist for a time as a confused mixture of disconnected and mechanically moving cells. But it may happen too that in an apparently dying or dead nation, the soul that retired comes back again, not in its old form and mode of life—for that cannot be—Egypt, if it lives again today cannot repeat the ages of the Pharoas and the Pyramids—but in a new personality, with a fresh life purpose. In such a case what happens is truly a national resurrection—a Lazarus coming back to life at the touch of the Divine.

We do not believe that India was ever completely dead or hopelessly moribund: her soul, although not always in front, was ever present as a living force, presiding over and guiding her destiny. That is why there is a perennial capacity for renewal in her and the capacity to go through dire ordeals. And to live up to her genius, she too must know how to march with the times, that is to say, not to cling to old and past forms—to be faithful to the ancient soul does not mean eternising the external frames and formulas that expressed that soul one time or another. Indeed the soul becomes alive and vigorous when it finds a new disposition of the life plan which can embody and translate a fresh creative activity, a new fulfilment emanating from the depths of the soul.

### *The Body Natural*

With regard to the food that man takes, there are two factors that determine or prescribe it. First of all, the real need of the body, that is to say, what the body actually requires for its maintenance, the elements to meet the chemical changes happening in it, something quite material and very definite, viz., the kind of food and the quantity. But usually this real need of the body is obscured and submerged under the demands of another kind of agency, almost altogether foreign to it, (1) vital desire and (2) mental notions. Indeed, the menu of our table, at least 90% of it, is

\*Based on a talk with the Mother.

arranged so as to satisfy the demands of the second category, the consideration that should come first comes last in fact. The body is at present a slave of the mind and the vital; it is hardly given the freedom of choosing its own requirements in the right quantity and quality. That is why the body is seen to suffer everywhere and is normally sick for the greater part of its earthly existence. It has been compelled to occupy an anomalous position in the human organism between these two tyrants. The vital goes by its greed, its attraction and repulsion, its impulse to excess (sometimes to its opposite of deprivation); what it has been accustomed to, what it has taken a fancy for, to that it clings, and if the body has not what it prescribes, it throws the suggestion into the body that it will become sick. The same with the mental factor. The physical mind has its own notions and schemes, pet ideas and plans (perhaps from what has been read in books or heard from persons) in respect of the body's needs; it thinks that if a certain prescription is not followed, the body will suffer. The mind and the vital are thus close friends and accomplices in regimenting the body. They impose their own demands and prejudices upon the body which helplessly gets entangled in them and loses its native instinct. The body left to itself is marvellously self-conscious; it knows spontaneously and unfailingly what is good for its health and strength. The animals usually, especially those of the forest, maintain still the unspoilt body instinct; for they have no mind to tyrannise over the body nor is their vital of a kind to go against the normal demands of the body. The body, segregated from the mind and the vital, very easily can choose the right kind of food and the right quantity and even vary them according to the varying conditions of the body. Common sense is an inherent attribute of the body consciousness; it never errs on the side of excess and immoderation or perversity. The vital is dramatic, the mind is imaginative, but the body is sanity itself. And that is not a sign of its unconsciousness and inertia. The dull and dumb immobility of which it is sometimes accused is after all perhaps a mode of its self-defence against the wild vagaries of the mind and the vital to which it is so often called upon to lend support. Indeed it may very well be that the accusation against the flesh that it is weak is only an opinion or suggestion imposed on the body by the mental-vital who throw the whole blame upon the body just to escape from the blame due to themselves. The vital is impatient and clamorous, and if it is all push and drive—towards physical execution and fulfilment—it is normally clouded and troubled and obscured and doubly twisted when counselled and supported by a mind, narrow and superficial, not seeing beyond its nose, bound within a frame of incorrect and borrowed notions.

The body, precisely because of its negative nature—its dumb inertia, as it is called—precisely because it has no axe of its own to grind, that is to

say, as it has no fancies and impulsions, plans and schemes upon which it can pride itself, precisely because of this childlike innocence, it has a wonderful plasticity and a calm stability, when it is not troubled by the mind or vital. Indeed the divine qualities that are secreted in the body, which the body seeks to conserve and express are a stable harmony, a balance and equilibrium, capable of supporting the whole weight of all the levels of consciousness from the highest peak to the lowest abysses even as physically it bears the weight of the entire depth of the atmosphere so lightly as it were, without feeling the burden in the least.

The gods have set in this world in his beauty and glory the delightful Fire, with his chariot of delight, luminous in the way of his workings, the universal godhead, who is seated in the waters, who is the discoverer of the sun-world, who enters into the depths and is swift to cross beyond, who is rapt in his mights, who bears in himself all things.

The Fire with the gods and creatures born builds by the thought of man the sacrifice in its many forms, he moves between earth and heaven as the charioteer bearing them to the achievement of their desires; he is the swift in motion and he is a dweller in the house who drives off every assailant.

O Fire, come near to us in a life rich with offspring, nourish us with energy, illumine our impulsions, animate in us the expanding powers of the Vast, O wakeful flame; thou art the aspirant strong in will for the gods and the illumined seers.\*

SRI AUROBINDO

\* Rigveda, 3. III. 5-7.

# SAVITRI

## BOOK THREE

### CANTO IV

#### THE VISION AND THE BOON

THEN suddenly there rose a sacred stir.  
A sound came quivering like a loved footfall  
Heard in the listening spaces of the soul;  
A touch perturbed his fibres with delight.  
An influence had approached the mortal range,  
A boundless Heart was near his longing heart,  
A mystic Form enveloped his earthly shape.  
All at her contact broke from silence' seal;  
Spirit and body thrilled identified,  
Linked in the grasp of an unspoken joy;  
Mind, members, life were merged in ecstasy.  
Intoxicated as with nectarous rain  
His nature's passioning stretches flowed to her  
Flashing with lightnings, mad with luminous wine.  
All was a limitless sea that heaved to the moon.  
A divinising stream possessed his veins,  
His body's cells awoke to spirit sense,  
Each nerve became a burning thread of joy:  
Tissue and flesh partook beatitude.  
Alight, the dun unplumbed subconscious caves  
Thrilled with the prescience of her longed-for tread  
And filled with flickering crests and praying tongues.  
Even lost in slumber, mute, inanimate  
His very body answered to her power.  
The One he worshipped was within him now:  
Flame-pure, ethereal-tressed a mighty Face  
Appeared and lips moved by immortal words;  
Lids, wisdom's leaves, drooped over rapture's orbs.

A marble monument of ponderings, shone  
A forehead, sight's crypt, and large like oceans's gaze  
Towards Heaven two tranquil eyes of boundless thought  
Looked into man's and saw the god to come.  
A shape was seen on threshold Mind, a Voice  
Absolute and wise in the heart's chambers spoke:  
"O Son of Strength who climbst creation's peaks,  
No soul is thy companion in the light;  
Alone thou standest at the eternal doors.  
What thou hast won is thine, but ask no more.  
O Spirit aspiring in an ignorant frame,  
O Voice arisen from the Inconscient's world,  
How shalt thou speak for men whose hearts are dumb,  
Make purblind earth the soul's seer-vision's home  
Or lighten the burden of the senseless globe?  
I am the Mystery beyond reach of mind,  
I am the goal of the travail of the suns;  
My fire and sweetness are the cause of life.  
But too immense my danger and my joy.  
Awake not the immeasurable descent,  
Speak not my secret name to hostile Time;  
Man is too weak to bear the Infinite's weight.  
Truth born too soon might break the imperfect earth.  
Leave the all-seeing Power to hew its way:  
In thy single vast achievement reign apart  
Helping the world with thy great lonely days.  
I ask thee not to merge thy heart of flame  
In the Immobile's wide uncaring bliss,  
Turned from the fruitless motion of the years,  
Deserting the fierce labour of the worlds,  
Aloof from beings, lost in the Alone.  
How shall thy mighty spirit brook repose  
While Death is still unconquered on the earth  
And Time a field of suffering and pain?  
Thy soul was born to share the laden Force;  
Obey thy nature and fulfil thy fate:  
Accept the difficulty and godlike toil,  
For the slow-paced omniscient purpose live.  
The Enigma's knot is tied in human kind.  
A lightning from the heights that think and plan,  
Ploughing the air of life with vanishing trails,  
Man, sole awake in an unconscious world,

Aspires in vain to change the cosmic dream.  
Arrived from some half-luminous Beyond  
He is a stranger in the mindless vasts;  
A traveller in his oft-shifting home  
Amid the tread of many infinitudes,  
He has pitched a tent of life in desert Space.  
Heaven's fixed regard beholds him from above,  
In the house of Nature a perturbing guest,  
A voyager twixt Thought's inconstant shores,  
A hunter of unknown and beautiful Powers,  
A nomad of the far mysterious Light,  
In the wide ways a little spark of God.  
Against his spirit all is in dire league,  
A Titan influence stops his Godward gaze.  
Around him hungers the unpitying Void,  
The eternal Darkness seeks him with her hands,  
Inscrutable Energies drive him and deceive,  
Immense implacable deities oppose.  
An inert Soul and a somnambulist Force  
Have made a world estranged from life and thought;  
The Dragon of the dark foundations keeps  
Unalterable the law of Chance and Death;  
On his long way through Time and Circumstance  
The grey-hued riddling nether shadow-Sphinx,  
Her dreadful paws upon the swallowing sands,  
Awaits him armed with the soul-slaying word:  
Across his path sits the dim camp of Night.  
His day is a moment in perpetual Time;  
He is the prey of the minutes and the hours.  
Assailed on earth and unassured of heaven,  
Descended here unhappy and sublime,  
A link between the demigod and the beast,  
He knows not his own greatness nor his aim;  
He has forgotten why he has come and whence;  
His spirit and his members are at war;  
His heights break off too low to reach the skies,  
His mass is buried in the animal mire.  
A strange antinomy is his nature's rule.  
A riddle of opposites is made his field:  
Freedom he asks but needs to live in bonds,  
He has need of darkness to perceive some light  
And need of grief to feel a little bliss;

He has need of death to find a greater life.  
All sides he sees and turns to every call;  
He has no certain light by which to walk;  
His life is a blind-man's-buff, a hide and seek;  
He seeks himself and from himself he runs;  
Meeting himself, he thinks it other than he.  
Always he builds, but finds no constant ground,  
Always he journeys, but nowhere arrives;  
He would guide the world, himself he cannot guide;  
He would save his soul, his life he cannot save.  
The light his soul has brought his mind has lost;  
All he has learned is soon again in doubt;  
A sun to him seems the shadow of his thoughts,  
Then all is shadow again and nothing is true:  
Unknowing what he does or whither he tends  
He fabricates signs of the Real in Ignorance.  
He has hitched his mortal error to Truth's star.  
Wisdom attracts him with her luminous masks,  
But never has he seen the face behind:  
A giant Ignorance surrounds his lore.  
Assigned to meet the cosmic mystery  
In the dumb figure of a material world,  
His passport of entry false and his personage,  
He is compelled to be what he is not;  
He obeys the Inconscience he has come to rule  
And sinks in Matter to fulfil his soul.  
Awakened from her lower driven forms  
The Earth-Mother gave her forces to his hands  
And painfully he guards the heavy trust;  
His mind is a lost torch-bearer on her roads.  
Illumining breath to think and plasm to feel,  
He labours with his slow and sceptic brain  
Helped by the reason's vacillating fires,  
To make his thought and will a magic door  
For knowledge to enter the darkness of the world  
And love to rule a realm of strife and hate.  
A mind impotent to reconcile heaven and earth  
And tied to Matter with a thousand bonds,  
He lifts himself to be a conscious god.  
Even when a glory of wisdom crowns his brow,  
When mind and spirit shed a grandiose ray  
To exalt this product of the sperm and gene,

## THE ADVENT

This alchemist's miracle from plasm and gas,  
And he who shared the animal's run and crawl,  
Lifts his thought-stature to the Immortal's heights,  
His life still keeps the human middle way;  
His body he resigns to death and pain,  
Abandoning Matter, his too heavy charge.  
A thaumaturge sceptic of miracles,  
A spirit left sterile of its occult power  
By an unbelieving brain and credulous heart  
He leaves the world to end where it began:  
His work unfinished he claims a heavenly prize.  
Thus has he missed creation's absolute.  
Halfway he stops his star of destiny:  
A vast and vain long-tried experiment,  
An ill-served high conception doubtfully done,  
The world's life falters on not seeing its goal,—  
A zigzag towards unknown dangerous ground  
Ever repeating its habitual walk,  
Ever retreating after marches long  
And hardest victories without sure result,  
Drawn endlessly an inconclusive game.  
In an ill-fitting and voluminous robe  
A radiant purpose still conceals its face,  
A mighty blindness stumbles hoping still.  
Because the human instrument has failed,  
The Godhead frustrate sleeps within its seed,  
A spirit entangled in the forms it made.  
His failure is not failure whom God leads;  
Through all a slow mysterious march goes on:  
An immutable Power has made this mutable world;  
A self-fulfilling transcendence dwells within,  
The driver of the soul upon its path,  
And how shall the end be vain when God is guide?  
The more the goal recedes, the more it lures;  
However his mind and flesh resist or fail,  
A will prevails cancelling his conscious choice.  
An Influx presses from the closed Beyond  
Forbidding to him rest and earthly ease,  
Till he has found himself he cannot pause.  
There is a Light that leads, a Power that aids;  
Unmarked, unfelt it sees for him and acts:  
Ignorant, he forms the All-conscious in his depths,

Human, looks up to superhuman peaks:  
A borrower of Supernature's gold,  
He paves his road to Immortality.  
The high gods look on man and watch and choose  
Today's impossibles for the future's base.  
His transience trembles with the Eternal's touch.  
The Immortals have their entries in his life:  
The Ambassadors of the Unseen draw near;  
A Splendour sullied by the mortal air,  
Love passes through his heart, a wandering guest,  
Beauty surrounds him for a magic hour,  
He has visits of a large revealing joy,  
Brief widenesses release him from himself,  
Hopes of a deathless sweetness lure and leave.  
His mind is crossed by strange discovering fires,  
Rare intimations lift his stumbling speech  
To a moment's kinship with the eternal Word;  
A masque of wisdom circles through his brain  
Perturbing him with glimpses half-divine.  
He lays his hands sometimes on the Unknown;  
He communes sometimes with Eternity.  
A strange and grandiose symbol was his birth  
And immortality and spirit-room  
And pure perfection and a shadowless bliss  
Are this afflicted creature's mighty fate.  
In him the Earth-Mother sees draw near the change  
Foreshadowed in her dumb and fiery depths,  
A godhead drawn from her transmuted limbs,  
An alchemy of Heaven on Nature's base.  
Adept of the self-born unfailing line,  
Leave not the light to die the ages bore,  
Help still humanity's blind and suffering life:  
Obey thy spirit's wide omnipotent urge.  
A witness to God's parley with the Night  
It leaned compassionate from immortal calm  
And housed desire, the troubled seed of things.  
Assent to thy high self, create, endure.  
Cease not from knowledge, let thy toil be vast,  
No more in earthly limits pen thy force;  
Equal thy work with long unending Time's.  
Traveller upon the bare eternal heights,  
Tread still the difficult and dateless path

## THE ADVENT

Joining the cycles with their austere curve  
 Measured for man by the initiate Gods.  
 My light shall be in thee, my strength thy force.  
 Let not the impatient Titan drive thy heart,  
 Ask not the imperfect fruit, the partial prize.  
 Only one boon, to greaten thy spirit, demand;  
 Only one joy, to raise thy kind, desire.  
 Above blind fate and the antagonist powers  
 Moveless there stands a high unchanging Will;  
 To its omnipotence leave thy work's result.  
 All things shall change in God's transfiguring hour."

August and sweet now hushed the organ Voice.  
 But Aswapaty's heart replied to her,  
 A cry amid the silence of the Vasts:  
 "How shall I rest content with mortal days  
 And the dull measure of terrestrial things,  
 I who have seen behind the cosmic mask  
 The glory and the beauty of thy face?  
 Hard is the doom to which thou bindst thy sons!  
 How long shall our spirits battle with the Night  
 And bear defeat and the brute yoke of Death,  
 We who are vessels of a deathless Force  
 And builders of the godhead of the race?  
 Or if it is thy work I do below  
 Amid the error and waste of human life  
 In the vague light of man's high-conscious mind,  
 Why breaks not in some distant gleam of thee?  
 Ever the centuries and millenniums pass.  
 Where in the greyness is thy coming's ray?  
 Where is the thunder of thy victory's wings?  
 Only we hear the feet of passing gods.  
 A plan in the occult eternal Mind  
 Mapped out to backward and prophetic sight,  
 The cycles still repeat and still aspire.  
 All we have done is ever still to do.  
 All breaks and all rebuilds and is the same.  
 Huge revolutions of life's fruitless gyre,  
 The new-born aeons perish like the old,  
 As if the sad Enigma kept its right  
 Till all is done for which this scene was made.  
 Too little the strength that now with us is born,

Too faint the light that steals through Nature's lids,  
Too scant the joy with which she buys our pain.  
In a brute world that knows not its own sense,  
Thought-racked upon the wheel of birth we live,  
The instruments of an impulse not our own  
Moved to achieve with our heart's blood for price  
Half-knowledge, half-creations that soon tire.  
A foiled immortal soul in perishing limbs,  
Baffled and beaten back we labour still;  
Annulled, frustrated, spent, we still survive.  
In anguish we labour that from us may rise  
A larger-seeing man with nobler heart,  
A golden vessel of the incarnate Truth,  
The executor of the divine attempt  
Equipped to wear the earthly body of God,  
Communicant and prophet and lover and king.  
I know that thy creation cannot fail.  
For even through the mists of mortal thought  
Infallible are thy mysterious steps,  
And, though Necessity dons the garb of Chance,  
Hidden in the blind shifts of Fate she keeps  
The slow calm logic of Infinity's pace  
And the inviolate sequence of its will.  
All life is fixed in an ascending scale  
And adamantine is the evolving Law;  
In the beginning is prepared the close.  
This strange irrational product of the mire,  
This compromise between the beast and God,  
Is not the crown of thy miraculous world.  
I know there shall inform the inconscient cells,  
At one with Nature and at height with heaven,  
A spirit vast as the containing sky  
And swept with ecstasy from invisible founts,  
A god come down and greater by his fall.  
A power arose out of my slumber's cell.  
Abandoning the tardy limp of the hours  
And the inconstant blink of mortal sight,  
There where the Thinker sleeps in too much light  
And intolerant flames the lone all-witnessing Eye,  
Hearing the word of Fate from Silence' heart  
In the endless moment of Eternity,  
It saw from timelessness the works of Time,

## THE ADVENT

Overpassed were the leaden formulas of the Mind,  
 Overpowered the obstacle of mortal Space:  
 The unfolding Image showed the things to come.  
 A giant dance of Shiva tore the past,  
 There was a thunder as of worlds that fall;  
 Earth was o'errun with fire and roaring Death,  
 There was a clangour of Destruction's wings:  
 The Titan's battle-cry was in my ears,  
 Alarm and rumour shook the armoured Night.  
 I saw the Omnipotent's flaming pioneers  
 Over the heavenly verge which turns towards life  
 Come crowding down the amber stairs of birth;  
 Forerunners of a divine multitude  
 Out of the paths of the morning star they came  
 Into the little room of mortal life.  
 I saw them cross the twilight of an age,  
 The sun-eyed children of a marvellous dawn,  
 The great creators with wide brows of calm,  
 The massive barrier-breakers of the world  
 And wrestlers with destiny in her lists of will,  
 The labourers in the quarries of the gods,  
 The messengers of the Incommunicable,  
 The architects of immortality.  
 Into the fallen human sphere they came,  
 Faces that wore the Immortal's glory still,  
 Voices that communed still with the thoughts of God,  
 Bodies made beautiful by the Spirit's light,  
 Carrying the magic word, the mystic fire,  
 Carrying the Dionysian cup of joy,  
 Approaching eyes of a diviner man,  
 Lips chanting an unknown anthem of the soul,  
 Feet echoing in the corridors of Time.  
 High priests of wisdom, sweetness, might and bliss,  
 Discoverers of beauty's sunlit ways  
 And swimmers of Love's laughing fiery floods  
 And dancers within rapture's golden doors,  
 Their tread one day shall change the suffering earth  
 And justify the light on Nature's face.  
 Although fate lingers in the high Beyond  
 And the work seems vain on which was spent the heart's force,  
 All shall be done for which our pain was borne.  
 Even as once man came behind the beast

As surely shall that great succession be.  
Oh, yet too heavy the world's burden grows;  
The splendid youth of Time has passed and failed;  
Heavy and long are the years our labour counts  
And still the seals are firm upon man's soul  
And weary is the ancient Mother's heart.  
O Truth defended in thy secret sun,  
Voice of her mighty musings in shut heavens  
On things withdrawn within her luminous depths,  
Wisdom-Splendour, Mother of the universe,  
Creatrix, the Eternal's artist Bride,  
Mystery and Muse with hieratic tongue,  
O radiant fountain of the world's delight  
World-free and unattainable above,  
O Bliss who ever dwellst deep hid within  
While men seek thee outside and never find!  
Incarnate the white passion of thy force,  
Mission to earth some living form of thee.  
Let once thy wisdom move in a mortal mind,  
Thy love throb singly in a human heart.  
Once give that it may walk our earthly road,  
Thy body of beauty and celestial grace.  
Let a great word be spoken from the heights  
And one great act unlock the doors of Fate."

His prayer sank down in the resisting Night  
Oppressed by the thousand forces that deny,  
As if too weak to climb to the Supreme.  
But there arose a wide consenting Voice;  
The spirit of beauty was revealed in sound:  
Light floated round the marvellous Vision's brow  
And on her lips the Immortal's joy took shape.  
"O strong forerunner, I have heard thy cry.  
One shall descend who shall break the iron Law  
And alter Nature's doom by the Spirit's power.  
A limitless Mind that can contain the world,  
A sweet and violent heart of ardent calms  
Moved by the passions of the gods shall come.  
All mights and greatnesses shall join in her;  
Beauty shall walk celestial on the earth,  
Delight shall sleep in the cloud-net of her hair  
And in her body as on his homing tree

## THE ADVENT

Immortal Love shall beat his glorious wings.  
A music of griefless things shall weave her charm;  
The harps of the Perfect shall attune her voice,  
The streams of Heaven shall murmur in her laugh,  
Her lips shall be the honeycombs of God,  
Her limbs his golden jars of ecstasy,  
Her breasts the rapture-flowers of Paradise.  
She shall bear Wisdom in her voiceless bosom,  
Strength shall be with her like a conqueror's sword  
And from her eyes the Eternal's bliss shall gaze.  
A seed shall be sown in Death's tremendous hour,  
A branch of heaven transplant to human soil;  
Nature shall overleap her mortal step;  
Fate shall be changed by an unchanging will."

As a flame disappears in endless Light  
Immortally extinguished in its source,  
Vanished the splendour and was stilled the word.  
An echo of delight that once was close,  
The harmony journeyed towards some distant hush,  
A music failing in the ear of trance,  
A cadence called by distant cadences,  
A voice that trembled into strains withdrawn.  
Her form retreated from the longing earth  
Forsaking nearness to the abandoned sense,  
Ascending to her unattainable home.  
Lone, brilliant, vacant lay the inner fields;  
All was unfilled inordinate spirit space,  
Indifferent, waste, a desert of bright peace.  
Then a line moved on the far edge of calm:  
The warm-lipped sentient soft terrestrial wave,  
A quick and many-murmured moan and laugh,  
Came gliding in upon white feet of sound.  
Unlocked was the deep glory of Silence' heart:  
The absolute unmoving stillnesses  
Surrendered to the breath of mortal air,  
Dissolving boundlessly the heavens of trance  
Collapsed to waking mind. Eternity  
Cast down its incommunicable lids  
Over its solitudes remote from ken  
Behind the voiceless mystery of sleep.  
The grandiose respite failed, the wide release.

Across the light of fast-receding planes  
That fled from him as from a falling star  
Compelled to fill his human house in Time  
His soul drew back into the speed and noise  
Of the vast business of created things.  
A chariot of the marvels of the heavens  
Broad-based to bear the gods on fiery wheels,  
Flaming he swept through the spiritual gates.  
The mortal stir received him in its midst.  
Once more he moved amid material scenes,  
Lifted by intimations from the heights  
And twixt the pauses of the building brain  
Touched by the thoughts that skim the fathomless surge  
Of Nature and wing back to hidden shores.  
The eternal seeker in the aeonic field  
Besieged by the intolerant press of hours  
Again was strong for great swift-footed deeds.  
Awake beneath the ignorant vault of Night,  
He saw the unnumbered people of the stars  
And heard the questioning of the unsatisfied flood  
And toiled with the form-maker, measuring Mind.  
A wanderer from the occult invisible suns  
Accomplishing the fate of transient things,  
A god in the figure of the arisen beast,  
He raised his brow of conquest to the heavens  
Establishing the empire of the soul  
On Matter and its bounded universe  
As on a solid rock in infinite seas.  
The Lord of Life resumed his mighty rounds  
In the scant field of the ambiguous globe.

END OF CANTO FOUR  
AND OF BOOK THREE

*Sri Aurobindo*

## *The Three Modes of Nature\**

TO transcend the natural action of the lower Prakriti is indispensable to the soul, if it is to be free in its self and free in its works. Harmonious subjection to this actual universal Nature, a condition of good and perfect work for the natural instruments, is not an ideal for the soul, which should rather be subject to God and His Shakti, but master of its own nature. As agent or as channel of the Supreme Will it must determine by its vision and sanction or refusal the use that shall be made of the storage of energy, the conditions of environment, the rhythm of combined movement which are provided by Prakriti for the labour of the natural instruments, mind, life and body. But this inferior Nature can only be mastered if she is surmounted and used from above. And this can only be done by a transcendence of her forces, qualities and modes of action; otherwise we are subject to her conditions and helplessly dominated by her, not free in the spirit.

The idea of the three essential modes of Nature is a creation of the ancient Indian thinkers and its truth is not at once obvious because it was the result of long psychological experiment and profound internal experience. Therefore without a long inner experience, without intimate self-observation and intuitive perception of the Nature forces it is difficult to grasp accurately or firmly utilise. Still certain broad indications may help the seeker on the Way of Works to understand, analyse and control by his assent or refusal the combinations of his own nature. These modes are termed in the Indian books qualities, *gunas*, and are given the names *sattwa*, *rajas*, *tamas*. Sattwa is the force of equilibrium and translates in quality as good and harmony and happiness and light; Rajas is the force of kinesis and translates in quality as struggle and effort, passion and action; Tamas is the force of inconscience and inertia and translates in quality as obscurity and incapacity and inaction. Ordinarily used for psychological self-analysis, these distinctions are valid also in physical Nature. Each thing and every existence in the lower Prakriti contains them and its process and dynamic form are the result of the interaction of these qualitative powers.

Every form of things, whether animate or inanimate, is a constantly maintained poise of natural forces in motion and is subject to an unending stream of helpful, disturbing or disintegrating contacts from other combinations of forces that surround it. Our own nature of mind, life and body is nothing else than such a formative combination and poise. In the reception of the

---

\* The Synthesis of Yoga, Chapter X (Revised Version).

enironing contacts and the reaction to them the three modes determine the temper of the recipient and the character of the response. Inert and inapt, he may suffer them without any responsive reaction, any motion of self-defence or any capacity of assimilation and adjustment; this is the mode of Tamas, the way of inertia. The stigmata of Tamas are blindness and unconsciousness and incapacity and unintelligence, sloth and indolence and inactivity and mechanical routine and the mind's torpor and life's sleep and the soul's slumber. Its effect, if uncorrected by other elements, can be nothing but disintegration of the form or the poise of the nature without any new creation or new equilibrium or force of kinetic progress. At the heart of this inert impotence is the principle of ignorance and an inability or slothful unwillingness to comprehend, seize and manage the stimulating or assailing contact, the suggestion of enironing forces and their urge towards fresh experience.

On the other hand, the recipient of Nature's contacts, touched and stimulated, solicited or assailed by her forces, may react to the pressure or against it. She allows, encourages, impels him to strive, to resist, to attempt, to dominate or engross his environment, to assert his will, to fight and create and conquer. This is the mode of rajas, the way of passion and action and the thirst of desire. Struggle and change and new creation, victory and defeat and joy and suffering and hope and disappointment are its children and build the many-coloured house of life in which it takes its pleasure. But its knowledge is an imperfect or a false knowledge and brings with it ignorant effort, error, a constant misadjustment, pain of attachment, disappointed desire, grief of loss and failure. The gift of rajas is kinetic force, energy, activity, the power that creates and acts and can overcome; but it moves in the wrong lights or the half-lights of the Ignorance and it is perverted by the touch of the Asura, Rakshasa and Pishacha. The arrogant ignorance of the human mind and its self-satisfied perversions and presumptuous errors, the pride and vanity and ambition, the cruelty and tyranny and beast wrath and violence, the selfishness and baseness and hypocrisy and treachery and vile meanness, the lust and greed and rapacity, the jealousy, envy and bottomless ingratitude that disfigure the earth-nature are the natural children of this indispensable but strong and dangerous turn of Nature.

But the embodied being is not limited to these two modes of Prakriti; there is a better and more enlightened way in which he can deal with surrounding impacts and the stream of the world-forces. There is possible a reception and reaction with clear comprehension, poise and balance. This way of natural being has the power that, because it understands, sympathises; it fathoms and controls and develops Nature's urge and her ways: it has an intelligence that penetrates her processes and her significances and can assimilate and utilise; there is a lucid response that is not over-

powered but adjusts, corrects, harmonises, elicits the best in all things. This is the mode of sattwa, the turn of Nature that is full of light and poise, directed to good, to knowledge, to delight and beauty, to happiness, right understanding, right equilibrium, right order: its temperament is the opulence of a bright clearness of knowledge and a lucent warmth of sympathy and closeness. A fineness and enlightenment, a governed energy, an accomplished harmony and poise of the whole being is the consummate achievement of the sattvic nature.

No existence is cast entirely in the single mould of any of these modes of the cosmic Force; all three are present in everyone and everywhere. There is a constant combining and separation of their shifting relations and interpenetrating influences, often a conflict, a wrestling of forces, a struggle to dominate each other. All have in great or in small extent or degree, even if sometimes in a hardly appreciable minimum, their sattwic states and clear tracts or inchoate tendencies of light, clarity and happiness, fine adaptation and sympathy with the environment, intelligence, poise, right mind, right will and feeling, right impulse, virtue, order. All have their rajasic modes and impulses and turbid parts of desire and passion and struggle, perversion and falsehood and error, unbalanced joy and sorrow, aggressive push to work and eager creation and strong or bold or fiery or fierce reactions to the pressure of the environment and to life's assaults and offers. All have their tamasic states and constant obscure parts, their moments or points of unconsciousness, their long habit or their temporary velleities of weak resignation or dull acceptance, their constitutional feebleesses or movements of fatigue, negligence and indolence and their lapses into ignorance and incapacity, depression and fear and cowardly recoil or submission to the environment and to the pressure of men and events and forces. Each one of us is sattwic in some directions of his energy of Nature or in some parts of his mind or character, in others rajasic, tamasic in others. According as one or other of the modes usually dominate his general temperament and type of mind and turn of action, it is said of him that he is the sattwic, the rajasic or the tamasic man; but few are always of one kind and none is entire in his kind. The wise are not always or wholly wise, the intelligent are intelligent only in patches; the saint suppresses in himself many unsaintly movements and the vile are not entirely evil: the dullest has his unexpressed or unused and undeveloped capacities, the most timorous his moments or his way of courage, the helpless and the weakling a latent part of strength in his nature. The dominant gunas are not the essential soul-type of the embodied being but only the index of the formation he has made for this life or during his present existence and at a given moment of his evolution in Time.



When the sadhaka has once stood back from the action of Prakriti within him or upon him and, not interfering, not amending or inhibiting, not choosing or deciding, allowed its play and analysed and watched the process, he soon discovers that her modes are self-dependent and work as a machine once put in action works by its own structure and propelling forces. The force and the propulsion come from Prakriti and not from the creature. Then he realises how mistaken was his impression that his mind was the doer of his works; his mind was only a small part of him and a creation and engine of Nature. Nature was acting all the while in her own modes moving the three general qualities about as a girl might play with her puppets. His ego was all along a tool and plaything; his character and intelligence, his moral qualities and mental powers, his creations and works and exploits, his anger and forbearance, his cruelty and mercy, his love and his hatred, his sin and his virtue, his light and his darkness, his passion of joy and his anguish of sorrow were the play of Nature to which the soul, attracted, won and subjected, lent its passive concurrence. And yet the determinism of Nature or Force is not all; the soul has a word to say in the matter,—but the secret soul, the Purusha, not the mind or the ego, since these are not independent entities, they are parts of Nature. For the soul's sanction is needed for the play and by an inner silent will as the lord and giver of the sanction it can determine the principle of the play and intervene in its combinations, although the execution in thought and will and act and impulse must still be Nature's part and privilege. The Purusha can dictate a harmony for Nature to execute, not by interfering in her functions but by a conscious regard on her which she transmutes at once or after much difficulty into translating idea and dynamic impetus and significant figure.

An escape from the action of the two inferior gunas is very evidently indispensable if we are to transmute our present nature into a power and form of the divine consciousness and an instrument of its forces. Tamas obscures and prevents the light of the divine knowledge from penetrating into the dark and dull corners of our nature. Tamas incapacitates and takes away the power to respond to divine impulse and the energy to change and the will to progress and make ourselves plastic to a greater Shakti. Rajas perverts knowledge, makes our reason the accomplice of falsehood and the abettor of every wrong movement, disturbs and twists our life-force and its impulses, oversets the balance and health of the body. Rajas captures all high-born ideas and high-seated movements and turns them to a false and egoistic use; even divine Truth and divine influences, when they descend into the earthly plane, cannot escape this misuse and seizure. Tamas unenlightened and rajas unconverted, no divine change or divine life is possible.

An exclusive resort to sattwa would seem to be the way of escape: but there is this difficulty that no one of the qualities can prevail by itself against its two companions and rivals. If, envisaging the quality of desire and passion as the cause of disturbance, suffering, sin and sorrow, we strain and labour to quell and subdue it, rajas sinks but tamas rises. For, the principle of activity dulled, inertia takes its place. A quiet peace, happiness, knowledge, love, right sentiment can be provided by the principle of light, but, if rajas is absent or completely suppressed, the quiet in the soul tends to become a tranquillity of inaction, not the firm ground of a dynamic change. Ineffectively right-thinking, right-doing, good, mild and even, the nature may become in its dynamic parts sattwa-tamasic, neutral, pale-tinted, uncreative or emptied of power. Mental and moral obscurity may be absent, but so are the intense springs of action, and this is a hampering limitation and another kind of incompetence. For tamas is a double principle; it contradicts rajas by inertia, it contradicts sattwa by narrowness, obscurity and ignorance and, if either is depressed, it pours in to occupy its place.

If we call in rajas again to correct this error and bid it ally itself to sattwa and by their united agency endeavour to get rid of the dark principle, we find that we have elevated our action, but that there is again subjection to rajasic eagerness, passion, disappointment, suffering, anger. These movements may be more exalted in their scope and spirit and action than before, but they are not the peace, the freedom, the power, the self-mastery at which we long to arrive. Wherever desire and ego harbour, passion and disturbance harbour with them and share their life. And if we seek a compromise between the three modes, sattwa leading, the others subordinate, still we have only arrived at a more temperate action of the play of Nature. A new poise has been reached, but a spiritual freedom and mastery are not in sight or else are still only a far-off prospect.

A radically different movement has to draw us back from the gunas and lift us above them. The error that accepts the action of the modes of Nature must cease; for as long as it is accepted, the soul is involved in their operations and subjected to their law. Sattwa must be transcended as well as rajas and tamas, the golden chain must be broken no less than the leaden fetters and the bond-ornaments of a mixed alloy. The Gita prescribes to this end a new method of self-discipline. It is to stand back in oneself from the action of the modes and observe this unsteady flux as the Witness seated above the surge of the forces of Nature. He is one who watches but is impartial and indifferent, aloof from them on their own level and in his native posture high above them. As they rise and fall in their waves, the Witness looks, observes, but neither accepts nor for the moment interferes with their course. First there must be the freedom

of the impersonal Witness; afterwards there can be the control of the Master, the Ishwara.

\* \* \*

The initial advantage of this process of detachment is that one begins to understand one's own nature and all Nature. The detached Witness is able to see entirely without the least blinding by egoism the play of her modes of the Ignorance and to pursue it into all its ramifications, coverings and subtleties—for it is full of camouflage and disguise and snare and treachery and ruse. Instructed by long experience, conscious of all act and condition as their interaction, made wise of their processes, he cannot any longer be overcome by their assaults, surprised in their nets or deceived by their disguises. At the same time he perceives the ego to be nothing better than a device and the sustaining knot of their interaction and, perceiving it, he is delivered from the illusion of the lower egoistic Nature. He escapes from the sattvic egoism of the altruist and the saint and the thinker; he shakes off from its control on his life-impulses the rajasic egoism of the self-seeker and ceases to be the laborious caterer of self-interest and the pampered prisoner or toiling galley-slave of passion and desire; he slays with the light of knowledge the tamasic egoism of the ignorant or passive being dull, unintelligent, attached to the common round of human life. Thus convinced and conscious of the essential vice of the ego-sense in all our personal action, he seeks no longer to find a means of self-correction and self-liberation in the rajasic or sattvic ego but looks above, beyond the instruments and the working of Nature, to the Master of works alone and his supreme Shakti, the supreme Prakriti. There alone all the being is pure and free and the rule of a divine Truth possible.

In this progression the first step is a certain detached superiority to the three modes of Nature. The soul is inwardly separated and free from the lower Prakriti, not involved in its coils, indifferent and glad above it. Nature continues to act in the triple round of her ancient habits,—desire, grief and joy attack the heart, the instruments fall into inaction and obscurity and weariness, light and peace come back into the heart and mind and body; but the soul stands unchanged and untouched by these changes. Observing and unmoved by the grief and desire of the lower members, smiling at their joys and their strainings, regarding and unoverpowered by the failing and the darknesses of the thought and the wildness or the weaknesses of the heart and nerves, uncomelled and unattached to the mind's illuminations and its relief and sense of ease or of power in the return of light and gladness, it throws itself into none of these things, but waits unmoved for the intimations of a higher Will and the intuitions of a greater luminous knowledge. Thus doing always, it becomes eventually free even

in its dynamic parts from the strife of the three modes and their insufficient values and imprisoning limits. For now this lower Prakriti feels progressively a compulsion from a higher Shakti. The old habits to which it clung receive no further sanction and begin steadily to lose their frequency and force of recurrence. At last it understands that it is called to a higher action and a better state and, however slowly, however reluctantly, with whatever initial or prolonged ill-will and stumbling ignorance, it submits, turns and prepares itself for the change.

The static freedom of the soul, no longer witness only and knower, is crowned by a dynamic transformation of the Nature. The constant mixture, the uneven operation of the three modes acting upon each other in our three instruments ceases from its normal confused, troubled and improper action and movement. Another action becomes possible, commences, grows, culminates, a working more truly right, more luminous, natural and normal to the deepest divine interplay of Purusha and Prakriti, although supernatural and supernormal to our present imperfect nature. The body conditioning the physical mind insists no longer on a tamasic inertia that repeats always the same ignorant movement: it becomes a passive field and instrument of a greater force and light, it responds to every demand of the spirit's force, supports every variety and intensity of new divine experience. Our kinetic and dynamic vital parts, our nervous and emotional and sensational and volitional being, expand in power and admit a tireless action and a blissful enjoyment of experience, but learn at the same time to stand on a foundation of wide self-possessed and self-poised calm, sublime in force, divine in rest, neither exulting nor excited nor tortured by sorrow and pain, neither harried by desire and importunate impulses nor dulled by incapacity and indolence. The intelligence, the thinking, understanding and reflective mind, renounces its sattvic limitations and opens to an essential light and peace. An infinite knowledge offers to us its splendid ranges, a knowledge not made up of mental constructions, not bound by opinion and idea or dependent on a stumbling uncertain logic and the petty support of the senses, but self-sure, authentic, all-penetrating, all-comprehending, a boundless bliss and peace, not dependent on deliverance from the hampered strenuousness of creative energy and dynamic action, not constituted by a few limited felicities but self-existent and all-including, pour into ever-enlarging fields and through ever-widening and always more numerous channels to possess the Nature. A higher force, bliss and knowledge from a source beyond mind and life and body seize on them to remould in a diviner image.

Here the disharmonies of the triple mode of our inferior existence are overpassed and there begins a greater triple mode of a divine Nature. There is no obscurity of tamas or inertia. Tamas is replaced by a divine peace and

tranquil eternal repose out of which is released as from a supreme matrix of calm concentration the play of action and knowledge. There is no rajasic kinesis, no desire, no joyful and sorrowful striving of action, creation and possession, no fruitful chaos of troubled impulse. Rajas is replaced by a self-possessed power and illimitable act of force that even in its most violent intensities does not shake the immovable poise of the soul or stain the vast and profound heavens and luminous abysses of its peace. There is no constructing light of mind casting about to seize and imprison the Truth, no insecure or inactive ease. Sattwa is replaced by an illumination and a spiritual bliss identical with the depth and infinite existence of the soul and instinct with a direct and authentic knowledge that springs straight from the veiled glories of the secret Omniscience. This is the greater consciousness into which our inferior consciousness has to be transformed, this nature of the Ignorance with its unquiet unbalanced activity of the three modes changed into this greater luminous supernature. At first we become free from the three gunas, detached, untroubled, *nistraigunya*; but this is the recovery of the native state of the soul, the self, the spirit free and watching in its motionless calm the motion of Prakriti in her force of the Ignorance. If on this basis the nature, the motion of Prakriti, is also to become free, it must be by a quiescence of action in a luminous peace and silence in which all necessary movements are done without any conscious reaction or participation or initiation of action by the mind or by the life-being, any ripple of thought or eddy of the vital parts, done under the impulsion, by the initiation, by the working of an impersonal cosmic or a transcendent Force, by a cosmic Mind, Life, Substance or by a pure Self-Power and Bliss other than our own personal being or its building of Nature. This is a state of freedom which can come in the Yoga of works through renunciation of ego and desire and personal initiation and the surrender of the being to the cosmic Self or to the universal Shakti,—as it can come in the Yoga of Knowledge by the cessation of thought, the silence of the mind, the opening of the whole being to the cosmic consciousness, to the cosmic self, the cosmic Dynamis or to the supreme Reality, or in the Yoga of devotion by the surrender of the heart and the whole nature into the hands of the All-Blissful as the adored Master of our existence. But the culminating change intervenes by a more positive and dynamic transcendence: there is a transference or transmutation into a superior spiritual status, *trigunātīta*, in which we participate in a greater spiritual dynamisation; for the three lower unequal modes pass into an equal triune mode of eternal calm, light and force, the repose, kinesis, illumination of the divine Nature.

This supreme harmony cannot come except by the cessation of egoistic will and choice and act and the quiescence of our limited intelligence. The

individual ego must cease to strive, the mind fall silent, the desire-will learn not to initiate. Our personality must join its source and all thought and initiation come from above. The secret Master of our activities will be slowly unveiled to us and from the security of the supreme will and knowledge give the sanction to the divine Shakti who will do all works in us with a purified and exalted nature for her instrument; the individual centre of personality will be only the upholder of her works here, their recipient and channel, the reflector of her power and luminous participator in her light, joy and force. Acting it will not act and no reaction of the lower Prakriti will touch it. The transcendence of the three modes of Nature is the first condition, their transformation the decisive step of this change by which the Way of Works climbs out of the pit of narrowness of our darkened human nature into the unwalled wideness of the Truth and Light above us.

SRI AUROBINDO

CONSCIOUSNESS is made up of two elements, awareness of self and things and forces and conscious power. Awareness is the first thing necessary, you have to be aware of things in the right consciousness, in the right way, seeing them in their truth; but awareness by itself is not enough. There must be a Will and a Force that makes the consciousness effective. Somebody may have the full consciousness of what has to be changed, what has to go and what has to come in its place, but may be helpless to make the change. Another may have the will-force, but for want of a right awareness may be unable to apply it in the right way at the right place. The advantage of being in the psychic consciousness is that you have the right awareness and its will being in harmony with the Mother's Will, you can call in the Mother's Force to make the change. Those who live in the mind and the vital are not so well able to do this; they are obliged to use mostly their personal effort and as the awareness and will and force of the mind and vital are divided and imperfect, the work done is imperfect, and not definitive. It is only in the supermind that Awareness, Will, Force are always one movement and automatically effective.

SRI AUROBINDO

## *The Psychic Being*

THE psychic being, Chaitya Purusha, Antaratman, occupies such an important place in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, it plays such an important part in the practice of Integral Yoga, that it behoves every follower of that path to have as clear a conception of it as is possible, right at the start. Of course, like every other concept in spiritual philosophy it tends to elude the grasp of the intellectual mind and is well-nigh beyond the reach of human speech. Still, in the course of our Sadhana we have got to know it and to seize it, and mind and speech are the only instruments available to us for the purpose, to start with at any rate.

In Yoga our principal aim is to raise our human consciousness to the level of the Divine consciousness and to bring down that higher consciousness into our terrestrial existence. This is an end impossible for man to achieve without Divine Grace. His rational mind, so well equipped for the ordinary affairs of life on earth, can do no more than merely indicate the way when he seeks something beyond its usual limits. But even this is a great deal. For without the mind's first Godward turn, we remain where we are, stuck in the mire of our old earth. When the turn towards the Divine has been definitely taken, we have to look for a guide who can pilot our bark safely over what to our ordinary mind are uncharted seas. This guide, this person who is to hold the rudder in our further journeys, is the psychic being, the Chaitya Purusha, who has even been concealed right within the heart awaiting our call. Once he has taken charge of our Sadhana, it may be said that we have made a fair start.

So, let us first try to understand who our guide is, and where he can be placed in the great Design of things. Sri Aurobindo has dealt with this subject on various levels to suit our capacity and requirements of the seeker. We shall very briefly go over what he has said, and then try to indicate how best we can set about making this guidance a living principle in our Yoga.

The psychic is our inner soul, obviously distinct from our outer mind, life and body. It is the permanent being in us who employs these grosser elements as its instruments, but is itself never affected by their working. It has, however, to be differentiated, on the one hand from our Kāmanātman, the false desire-soul, and on the other hand from our Jivatman, the true central being. Of the desire-soul we shall speak in greater detail anon. It is sufficient at this stage to quote a few lines from the Synthesis of Yoga:

"The Will-in-life for its own purpose in the ignorance has created a

false kind of desire-soul and substituted it for that spark of the Divine which is the true psyche."

Man's central being is that portion of God in him which supports all the rest overlooking his evolutionary progression from birth to birth. One may say however that the central being has two forms or aspects. The higher is the Jivatman which we come to know only when we have awakened to true self-knowledge. The lower is the Antaratman, the psychic being which stands behind our three lower faculties—mind, life and body—and supports them. The higher is above the manifestation presiding from on high over the personalities evolved, while the lower stands behind individual evolution and gives it its support. To speak in a general way, the Jivatman lives in the essence and is prior to the evolution, while the Antaratman is definitely evolutionary. Therefore while our Jivatman may appear remote to us, for the present, as an eternal portion of Paramatman, the transcendent Divine, our relationship with his lesser representative, the Chaitya Purusha, is of the most intimate kind, for he is in direct charge of our evolving existence in this world, is 'a spark of the Divine Fire', a spark 'growing into a fire, evolving with the growth of the consciousness'. In the Life Divine, the psychic being is characterised as the 'flame of the Godhead always alight within us ... a flame born out of the Divine and luminous inhabitant of the Ignorance, grows in it till it is able to turn it towards the Knowledge'. In his Synthesis of Yoga, Sri Aurobindo compares this Psychic with the sun-flower, and says, 'it is the very nature of the soul or psychic being to turn towards the Divine Truth as the sun-flower to the sun'. In his Lights on Yoga the Master observes, "The natural attitude of the psychic being is to feel itself as the child, the son of God, the Bhakta". While, therefore, this being comes out of and represents the Jivatman, it is man's true centre, the Purusha seated in his heart, who is in direct charge of his evolution; yet, let there be no mistake, in the fully awakened consciousness the two principles join together and become one.

Such is the psychic being whose help is absolutely indispensable to us in our Sadhana. We have said already that it is well-nigh impossible for man to achieve unaided the necessary self-opening and self-surrender to the Divine Mother. As soon as a man's mind has taken a definite and decisive turn, he has to awaken the psychic lying dormant in his heart, bring it to the forefront of his being and keep it there, allowing it gradually to master his mind, life and body. It should, however, be noted that this soul-personality of ours is not born in us, like Minerva, fully armed. Indeed, it is at first very weak and indistinct, and evolves quite slowly. On this subject the Master says, 'yet the soul is at first but a spark and then a little flame of godhead burning in the midst of a darkness, for the most part of it is veiled in its inner sanctum'. 'No bigger than the thumb of a man'

was the image used by the ancient seers. Even when it has begun to move forward the psychic is not always able to assert itself against the ignorant inertia of the body, the petty and often erroneous constructions of the mind and the loud arrogance of the vital nature, and in a sense accepts the outer human life with its many-sided and crude activities. But it has a subtle way of its own which ultimately prevails against the obstinacy or inertia of the lower principles. Slowly, but surely, it works to set free the divine element in them, to separate truth from error and love from egoistic desire. No doubt, in the course of this labour it has occasionally to submit to 'mistakes of action, wrong placement of feeling, wrong choice of person, error in the exact form of its will'. But in the end the voice of the soul prevails. Its long struggle culminating in ultimate victory is something that we believe in and look forward to; but the first appearance of the Divine spark against a background of obscurity and the thin but bright ray of supreme bliss that it brings down to us is familiar even to the comparative novice on the path.

We have already referred to the desire-soul, the darker counterpart of the psychic which is ever masquerading before man as his true inner self. This principle was useful enough in a former stage of evolution when vitality had to assert itself aggressively against an environment of dark unconsciousness. But that utility has long passed away. The mind of man which for a long time controlled his nature has definitely got tired of the game of ignorance and separateness that it has had to play, and is preparing to hand over all power and direction to its divine counterpart, the Supermind.

The fourfold status of life that evolved in the past has been thus described in *The Life Divine*. The first stage was that of a dumb unconscious drive or urge—Tamasic. The second was characterised by Rajasic desire, eager to possess but limited in capacity. The key-note of the third was love which sought both to possess and to be possessed, both to receive and to give itself—Sattwa. The fourth is the culmination of the first three, a transcending of the Gunas, Divine unity of the Supramental consciousness. These various stages constitute 'the ascent of the divine Delight in things from its dumb conception in Matter through vicissitudes and opposites to its luminous consummation in spirit'.

But where in human existence is this divine Delight to be found? Pure Existence manifests itself in the world as substance, form of being or Matter; Conscious-Force uses Vitality for its cosmic term, while Supermind expresses itself in creation by its subordinate term, Mind. The divine principle of Bliss (Ananda) must necessarily be manifested in us through some subordinate term. This term in man, the Master says, is his soul, the psychic being, which is not his mind, not his life, far less his body.

But just as we have two minds (one subliminal and the other the crude outer organ), two lives (one the subliminal and the other the gross external), two physical forms (one a subtle substance and the other crude matter), so we have in us two psychic principles, 'the surface desire-soul which works in our vital cravings, our emotions, aesthetic faculty and mental seeking for power, knowledge and happiness and a subliminal psychic entity, a pure power of delight, love, joy and refined essence of being which is our true soul behind the outer form of psychic existence which we so often dignify by its name'.

In this surface soul there is no real soul-life. All the outer forms of our being—mental, vital, physical—are those of our egoistic nature. Between the inferior soul and its subliminal counterpart, Sri Aurobindo says, there are thick walls of egoism 'which have indeed gates of penetration, but in their entry through them the touches of the divine cosmic Delight become dwarfed, distorted or have to come in masked as their own opposites'. The two souls, superficial and subliminal, are coexistent. Each has its own values and standards. The psychic, by its very nature, takes an equal delight in all contacts, but it knows the standards and values of its lesser counterpart, registers its various reactions, but gathers from them strength, pleasure and knowledge. The desire-soul, left to itself, would circle in the same groove for ever. But the true Psychic in us, standing behind, is ever watchful and profits by the development and experience of the lower principles. Thus is the evolution of life on earth kept up.

At a certain stage in our Sadhana, when the mind has quieted down sufficiently and is no longer full of its own certitudes, when the vital has grown more subdued and its clamorous demands have been in part silenced, when the obscurity and inertia of the physical body does not altogether hide the inner light, the psychic comes to the front and takes charge of our Yoga. With its potent aid the Sadhaka can successfully open himself to the Divine Mother, and proceed slowly, but steadily, to make an integral and complete surrender to Her.

But, in the early part of our Sadhana, individual effort is essential. There should certainly be an attempt to surrender oneself to the Mother even in the very early stages, but it can only be an extremely slow process, as long as the mind clings to its ideas and ideals, and the vital comes forward with its demands in return for its acquiescence, while the surrender of the physical body is often a mere movement of inertia. A firm Godward aspiration, an earnest mental effort to bring about an inner quietude, calm, peace and silence, a state of unshakable faith and absolute sincerity —these are quite essential to begin with. When these have been attained and conditions are favourable, the psychic wakes up, comes to the front and takes charge of the work of self-opening and self-consecration of the

Sadhaka and his Yoga makes a real start. For, the soul is by nature 'not only willing but eager and happy to surrender'. But it should be remembered that both these processes—the opening out of the psychic and the submission of all parts of the being—are very gradual. Therefore, a certain amount of mental effort—at least aspiration and vigilance—are needed till the Divine Power takes complete possession of mind, will, life and body.

The psychic soul being a manifestation of the divine element of Ananda, its most intimate character is 'its pressure towards the Divine through a secret love, joy and oneness. It is Divine love that it seeks most, it is the love of the Divine that is its spur, its goal'. It accepts the human form of love and of the works of love, but is aware of their limitations. It is never led away by the mind's inclinations or by the life's misuse of the great truths of love, but 'calls down the entire truth of divine Love to heal their malformations, to deliver mental, vital, physical love from their insufficiencies or their perversions and reveal to them their abounding share of the intimacy and the oneness and the ascending ecstasy and the descending rapture'.

That the Chaitya Purusha is indispensable to our spiritual progress is undoubtedly. But it should also be remembered that a psychic awakening is not the whole aim of our Sadhana. The complete spiritual fulfilment can not come until the Supermind has descended into us. In other words, although psychic transformation is a necessary condition of the total transformation of our nature, it cannot by itself take us to the highest level of the spirit.

Sri Aurobindo says in *The Life Divine*: "In Supermind is the integrating Light, the consummating Force, the wide entry into the Supreme Ananda; the psychic being uplifted by that Light and Force can unite itself with the original Delight of existence from which it came".

The same thought is expressed in a somewhat different form in the *Synthesis of Yoga*: "And yet the leading of the inmost psychic being is not found sufficient until it has succeeded in raising itself out of this mass of inferior Nature to the highest spiritual levels and the divine spark and flame descended here have rejoined themselves to their original Ether".

These limitations of the psychic are very true and we should certainly know of them. But there is no denying the fact that to us humble walkers on the path the awakening of the inner soul in us and the development of our psychic being constitute just now an all-important step in our spiritual progress.

C. C. DUTT

## *The Future Poetry\**

### RECENT ENGLISH POETRY (3)

THE rhythmic change which distinguishes the new poetry, may not be easy to seize at the first hearing, for it is a subtle thing in its spirit more than in its body; but there is a change too, more readily tangible, in the language of this poetry, in that fusion of a concentrated substance of the idea and a transmuting essence of the speech which we mean by poetic style. But here too, if we would understand in its issues the evolution of poetic speech in a language, it is on the subtler things of the spirit, the significant inner changes that we must keep our eye. We are, however, content with saying that the word of the poet is the speech of the imagination or that he works by an inspiration. But this is an insufficient account; for imagination is of many different kinds and inspiration touches the mind at different levels and breaks out through different media before it issues through the gates of the creative imagination. What we mean by inspiration is that the impetus to creation and utterance comes to us from a superconscious source above the ordinary mentality. But it is seldom that the whole word leaps direct from that source,—ordinarily it goes through some secondary process in the brain-mind itself. And the value, character and force of the word of the poet vary according to the action of those parts of our mentality which dominate—the vital mind, the emotional temperament, the imaginative or reflective intelligence or the higher intuitive intelligence. But also there is in us a direct medium between that divine and this human mentality, an intuitive soul-mind supporting the rest, which has its share both in the transmission and the formal creation, and it is where this gets out into overt working, discloses its shaping touch or makes heard its transmitting voice that we get the really immortal tones of speech and heights of creation. And it is the epochs when there is in the mind of a race some enthusiastic outburst or some calm august action of this intuitive power, intermediary of the inspiration of the spirit or its revelations, that make the great ages of poetry.

In English literature this period was the Elizabethan. Then the speech of poetry got into it a ring and turn of direct intuitive power. Even the lesser poets are touched by it. The difference can be measured by taking the work of Chaucer or of subsequent poets almost at their best and Shakespeare at a quite ordinary level :

\* A summary of Sri Aurobindo's Future Poetry ("Arya", 1917-1920)

He was a very parfit gentle knight  
and  
Of moving accidents by flood and field,  
Of hair-breadth scapes in the imminent deadly breach.

Chaucer speaks from the poetic intellect and satisfies by a just and pleasing expression, in Shakespeare the words get, one might say, into the entrails of vision and do not stop short at the clear measure of the thing seen, but evoke their very quality and give us immediately the inmost vital fibre and thrill of the life they describe and interpret. It is not merely a difference in the measure of the genius, but of its source.

Shakespeare's is a highly imaged style ("Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow" etc.) but the images are not, as with so any poets, decorative or brought in to enforce and visualise the intellectual sense, they are more immediately revelatory. But he has too a clearer, a less crowded, still swifter fashion of speech in which they are absent; for an example,

She should have died hereafter;  
There would have been a time for such a word,—

which has yet the same deep and penetrating intuitive spirit in its utterance.  
Or the two manners meet together and lean on each other,—

I have lived long enough; my way of life  
Is fallen into the sere, the yellow leaf,

or become one, as in the last speech of Anthony,—

I am dying, Egypt, dying; only  
I here importune death awhile, until  
Of many thousand kisses the poor last  
I lay upon thy lips.

But all have the same characteristic stamp of the intuitive mind rapidly and powerfully at work; but always too,—and this is the important decision,—that mediator between the secret spirit and our ordinary surface mentality works in him through and behind the life vision to give the vital impression, the vital psychology, the life-burden of the thought, the emotion, the act or the thing seen in Nature.

The movement that immediately followed, abandoned this power which Shakespeare and the Elizabethans had brought into English poetry. It gained something by its sacrifice, it purified the language, laid a clearer basis of thought, went back to ordinary speech, but it lost this Shakespearian directness of intuitive vision and spontaneous power of utterance. English poetry has got away from the Elizabethan outbreak nearer to a kinship with the mind and manner of the Greek and Latin poets, and their

intellectual descendants, though still, it is to be noted, keeping something, a subtle and intimate turn, a power of fire and ether which has become native to it, a legacy from the Shakespearean speech which was not there in its beginnings. This imaginatively intellectual basis of speech remains constant down to the end of the Victorian era.

But at the same time there emerges, at times, a certain effort to recapture the Shakespearean poetry and intensity and the awakening turn of the direct intuitive expression on a subtler and more ethereal level. The clarified intellect, observing life from above, is in itself a higher thing than the vital and emotional mind which responds more immediately and powerfully to life, but is caught in its bonds; and if the direct intuitive power can be got to work on the level just above the ordinary thinking mind where that mind opens through the full intuitive intelligence to a greater supra-intellectual mass and subtlety of light, it will bring in revelation and inspiration of mightier and profounder things than when it works behind the normal mind. Of this new effort and this new thing we get magical first indications in the pre-Victorian poets, as in Wordsworth's

And beauty born of murmuring sound  
Shall pass into her face.

or, in many styles, in Keats'

Deep in the shady sadness of a vale  
Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,  
Far from the fiery noon and eve's one star.

Solitary thinkings such as dodge  
Conception to the very bourne of heaven.  
The journey homeward to the habitual self.

These lines of Keats are Shakespearean in their quality, they have recovered the direct revealing word and intimate image of the full intuitive manner, but they enter into a world of thought and inner truth other than Shakespeare's. In the Victorian poets we get occasionally the same tendency in a stronger but less happy force, for it is weighted down by an increased intellectuality. But in more recent work it is precisely the recovery of this supreme power of speech on that loftier and subtler level which to one who comes freshly to this poetry breaks out with a sense of satisfying surprise and discovery. It is not complete; it is not everywhere; it is only just rising from the acquired basis of the previous delights of expression to its own realm; but it is there in a comparative abundance and it is the highest strain of its intensities. In Meredith's

Nor know they joy of sight  
Who deem the wave of rapt desire must be

Its wreckings and last issue of delight.  
Dead seasons quicken in one petal spot  
Of colour unforgot.

In Phillips'

Dreadful suspended business and vast life  
Pausing  
Motionless in an ecstasy of rain.

In the Irish poets it comes most characteristically in a delicate and fine beauty of the word of vision and of an intuitive entrance into the mystery of things as in lines like A.E.'s

Is thrilled by fires of hidden day  
And haunted by all mystery.

This is a style and substance which recovers that had been lost and yet is new and pregnant of fresh promises in English literature.

It is sufficient at present to indicate this new power of language. It points to a greater thing than has yet been achieved. Shakespeare is still—though need he be always?—immeasurably the largest name in English poetry; but there remains greater things to be seen by the poet than Shakespeare saw and greater things to be said in poetry than Shakespeare said,—and here we have an indication of the way on which they lie and of the gates which open to their hiding place and own home of light and self-revelation.

#### RECENT ENGLISH POETRY (4)

Though the inspiring spirit and shaping substance of this new poetry has been indicated to some extent, it is necessary to dwell on it more perusingly so that we may get a closer glimpse of the things towards which we are moving. The change that is coming or at least striving to come, might be described on the surface as a great and subtle deepening and enlarging of the thought-mind in the race and a new profounder, closer, more intimate way of seeing, feeling, appreciating, interpreting life and Nature and existence.

The mind and soul of the race is now moving forward on the basis of what it has gained by a century of intellectual stir and activity, towards a profounder mood and a more internal force of thought and life. The intellectual way of looking at things is being gradually transcended or is raising itself to a power beyond itself. Mankind is still engaged in thinking and searching with an immense stress of mental power, but it is now once more in search of its soul and of the spirit and deeper truth of things, although

in a way very different from that of its past cultural ages and on the whole with a greater power and subtlety of the mind, though not as yet, but that too seems predestined to come, with a greater power of the spirit. This change, reflected in the poetry of the time is not an abrupt turn or a casting away of the immediate past from which it was born, but a rapid development of new view-points, a shedding of husks and externalities, a transformation by the entrance of a new force. The whole view and sense of existence has deepened into a greater subjectivity. For the subjectivity of the nineteenth century was a matter of the temperament, an activity of the strongly marked psychological individuality turned upon things held under the lens as an object of the intelligence; but now there are coming a universal subjectivity of the whole spirit, an attempt towards closeness and identity, a greater community of the individual with the universal soul and mind. The profounder ranges of his being are now sounded, Nature is seen more in her hidden suggestions and soul meanings, the things that lie behind the material world are almost for the first time being touched and seen with a close and revealing intimacy. The communion of the human soul with the Divine is becoming once more a subject of thought and utterance, not now limited to the old religious and personal form, but enlightened by a sense of the Infinite and Eternal which has arisen from and vivified the larger cosmic sense for which the thinking and discovery of the last century was a training. This change amounts to a revolution of the whole attitude of man towards existence; it is commencing by an extension of the intellectual stress and a consequent breaking down of its bounds.

This considerable change was intellectually anticipated and to some extent prepared in the last century itself by a strain of strenuous intellectuality among a small number of writers. Emerson, Carlyle, Ruskin build for us a bridge of transition from the intellectual transcendentalism of the earlier nineteenth century across a subsequent low-lying scientific, utilitarian, externalised intellectualism, as if from bank to bank across morass or flood, over the age now beginning to come in towards us. But in the region of poetic thought and creation Whitman was the one prophetic mind which consciously and largely foresaw and prepared the paths and had some sense of that to which they are leading. Whitman by the intensity of his intellectual and vital dwelling on the things he saw and expressed, arrives at some profound sense of the greater self of the individual, of the greater self in the community of the race and in all its immense past action opening down through the broadening eager present to an immenser future, of the greater self of Nature and of the eternal, the divine Self and Spirit of existence who broods over these things, who awaits them and in whom they come to the sense of their oneness. He gets it repeatedly through his vision of the past opening to the ideal future,

The journey done, the journeyman come home,  
 And man and art with Nature found again. . .  
 The almighty leader now for once has signalled his wand.

And, as in the *Passage to India*, he sees in this a new voyage of the human spirit,—

O farther sail!  
 Sail forth, steer for the deep waters only. . .  
 For we are bound where no mariner has yet dared to go,  
 And we will risk the ship ourselves and all. . .  
 O daring joy, but safe! Are they not all seas of God?

And with a singularly clear first seeing of the ideal goal and the ideal way of conversion of the intellect and vital into the spiritual self, he calls the spirit of man to the adventure.

The circumnavigation of the world begins,  
 Of man, the voyage of his mind's return,  
 To reason's early paradise,  
 Back, back, to wisdom's birth, to innocent intuitions,  
 Again with fair creation,—

In other passages too he casts forward to the ideal heart of this wider movement of man into the sense of the divine unity which is its completion, brings out the divinity of the soul in man and its kinship to the divinity of the Eternal and he foresees the coming of that kinship of God and man to conscious fruition in oneness. These passages send forward an arc-light of prophetic expression on what is at the very heart of the new movement of humanity.

The idea in these and cognate passages anticipates the new age, but the language and method are still of the poetic intellectual straining to some fullest power of its intelligence and speech-force. At the centre of English poetry, in England itself, we have found another turn of intuitive speech which is more native to that closer actuality of experience for which we seek, thanks perhaps to the special gift of the Anglo-Celtic mind, which leaps at once to the forceful, native, instinctive energy of poetic expression of the thing it has to say. The full idea of the thing we do not get in any considerable degree or range, perhaps because of the inferior turn for large and straight thinking on the great scale which is the defect of the English mind.

The citations already given to illustrate the new rhythm and language indicate also this power and thought-turn in the substance, a suggestion of the hidden and the infinite in all it touches. A few more citations from the same poets may help to bring it out with more precision. The early and greater of Phillips is of this stamp. The love of Idas for Marpessa is not

satisfied with the old forms of passion and feeling and imaginative idealism.  
The very passion for physical beauty is the passion for a body

packed with sweet  
Of all this world, that cup of brimming June,  
That jar of violet wine set in the air,  
That palest rose sweet in the night of life.

But says Idas,

Not for this do I love thee, but  
Because Infinity upon thee broods,  
And thou art full of whispers and of shadows.  
Thou meanest what the sea has striven to say  
So long, and yearned up to the cliffs to tell;  
Thou art what all the winds have uttered not,  
What the still night suggesteth to the heart,  
Thy voice is like to music heard ere birth,  
Some spirit lute touched on a spirit sea;  
Thy face remembered is from other worlds.  
It has been died for though I know not where,  
It has been sung of though I know not when.  
I am aware of other times and lands,  
Of births far back, of lives in many stars.

This enlarging of the particular to meet and become one with the universal and the infinite is a very characteristic and indicative feature of this new poetry, whether in its treatments of a common human idea or emotion or of Nature. Meredith with his great force of thinking gives us the clear significance of this seeing identity of the soul of man with the hidden soul in earth-nature.

I neighbour the invisible  
So close that my consent  
Is asked only for spirits masked  
To leap from trees and flowers.  
And this because with them I dwell  
In thought, which calmly bent  
To read the lines dear earth designs  
Shall speak her life in ours.

The effort of the poetry of this kind of inspiration may be defined by adapting another expression of Meredith's

To spell the letters of the sky and read  
A reflex upon earth else meaningless.

And the fullness of that which it points to beyond itself is a movement to unite the life of the earth, not lessened, not denied, not cast away, but accepted, with its own hidden spiritual reality, the one crucial movement necessary for man before he can reach that perfection which the race shall have on its heights, when

The vile plucked out of them, the unlovely slain,  
Not forfeiting the beast with which they are crossed,  
To stature of the Gods they shall attain.  
They shall uplift their earth to meet her Lord,  
Themselves the attuning chord.

The indication that we get in these and other English poets opens to a clearer totality in the two great Irish voices—Yeats and A.E. In Yeats the remarkable interweaving, whether against a background of Irish tradition and legend or a directer thought, of the earthly life of man with the unseen psychical life which, if we could only see it, as we can when we go back from the frontage of things into the inner soul-spaces, presses upon the earth-life and supports it, so that at times our world seems only its detached projection; the reading through the signs of life of the brighter letters of an ideal and eternal Beauty; the insistence, even when touching exclusively our external life, on the suggestion of finer soul-values which exceed its material meanings. The poetry of A.E. is still more remarkable. What the others suggest or give us in more or less luminous glimpses, he casts into concentrated expression from a nearer spiritual knowledge. For instance,

We bade adieu to love the old,  
We heard another lover then,  
Whose forms are myriad and untold,  
Sigh to us from the hearts of men.

He lives on the spiritual plane to which so much of this poetry is an indistinct or a less distinct aspiration and his self-expression is at times rendered remote and unseizable. This is not the frank marriage and close unity of the earth and heavens of which Whitman and Meredith speak, but a rare, high and exclusive pinnacle of the soul's greater sight.

SISIR KUMAR GHOSH

## *Is Sri Aurobindo New?*

(A LETTER)

THE western world is often declared to be so engrossed in its new materialism that it cannot listen to any of the old spiritual messages. In a similar way the eastern world seems at times so engrossed in its old spirituality that no spiritual message that is new reaches its mind.

There are some good reasons for this unprogressive tendency. First, the spirituality of the past is really immense and its hold, therefore, cannot help being great. Second, civilisations that are, like India's, very old and have still a living continuity with their past develop an intent look backwards. Third, the accustomed meanings of spiritual terms have got impressed on our minds with such prolonged force that new complexions given them are liable to be overlooked. I was hoping, however, that there would be more than a handful who might keep on the *qui vive* for the genuinely new in spirituality and be subtle enough to understand it when it got explained in various ways and with a marvellously illuminating style as has happened in a book like *The Life Divine*. But if you declare that you have given days and nights to the consideration of Sri Aurobindo's vision and yoga and yet found nothing new, I am brought to the verge of despair. How shall I strike upon your eyes the novel shades of his thought, the original turns of his experience? Perhaps it is best to concentrate on presenting his newness under one aspect that would be the most spectacular, the most sensational.

To say that Sri Aurobindo is new is, of course, not to deny the many common factors between him and the Indian rishis and yogis that are gone. He stands grounded in India's colossal experience of God, and from the God-experience of no other country could he lead on to what is his own individual contribution to spirituality. In fact, the starting-point of his contribution is not anything unknown to the ancient scriptures: the Creative Consciousness of the eternal and infinite Divine putting forth the world-play and taking part in it for a various expression of Himself by purifying and illuminating our mind and life-force and body. In Vaishnavism and Tantricism the ideal of God's self-expression in our nature was the most openly held. But everywhere a definite irreducible quantity was recognised in which no self-expression of the Divine could take place. And that is why, on the most external plane, the fact of death was accepted as inherent in earth-existence. The triple formation of mind, life and body that makes

up earth-existence was regarded as never capable of perfection and so always to be dropped after a time. Perfection abided somewhere beyond, whither the soul was bidden to rise, either to stay for ever or else to return after a while for the sake of suffering humanity. Birth was either to be escaped from or accepted in an endless series: in both cases no birth could be such as to allow absolute perfection of the mind-life-body formation. Disease and decay and deathwards-progressing old age were always inevitable: even the hathayogis who commanded extraordinary powers of reinforcing the ageing physical system by subtle vital energy never claimed even as a possibility a complete partaking by the body in a divine physicality which by the presence of the immortal consciousness and substance would not ever die by age or disease or stroke of accident.

You must admit that since the body is our characteristic vehicle of earth-existence there can be no entire self-manifestation of the Divine here without this vehicle being thoroughly divinised and changed into stuff of the immortal divine being with its incorruptible illumination and imperishable bliss and power. No so-called natural law or necessity should compel this body to suffer disease and grow aged and finally die or remain open to accident and be a victim to "crass casualty". Disease and old age and the death consequent upon them or due to sudden violent circumstance are a stamp of undivinity—they are in the body what ignorance and falsehood and obscuration are in our mental and vital consciousness. A divinised being on earth is one in whom not merely the mental and vital consciousness but also the physical instrument has been changed into divine and therefore fully illumined and immortal and immune substance. Indeed, no such change can be wholly effected in the former without a corresponding change in the latter—unless they stand aloof from it and do not associate themselves with it for God's manifestation on earth. As soon as there is the association indispensable for manifesting God on earth, the imperfection of the body would interfere with the perfect working of the mental and vital elements for terrestrial purposes. Hence it follows that so long as the body's imperfection is accepted as in the last resort irremediable, there can be no vision by any yogi of integral transformation.

And if you give close thought to the matter, you will observe that so long as an irreducible quantity of imperfection is acknowledged, a tremendous hiatus is caused between the Divine and earth-existence. All, says the ancient wisdom, is the Divine. But if all is the Divine, then all can manifest divine values perfectly in an evolutionary scheme like our earth's: there cannot be an irreducible quantity of the imperfect in man's career through time. Once this quantity is granted in spite of the process of evolution, we automatically make a division in ultimate being: there

## THE ADVENT

170

is the Divine and there is the undivine which cannot wholly express and be transformed into divine values. To fight clear of this dualism arises the theory of *Maya*, Illusion. Whatever holds the irreducible quantity of the imperfect cannot really be—it must be a hallucination, a strange non-being that yet seems to exist. The only thing to do for the seeker of "the one entire and perfect chrysolite", the innate idealist in man wanting the Absolute, the Flawless, the cent-per-cent Divine, is to get rid of this illusion and pass into the formless and nameless samadhi, Nirvana, Nirguna Brahman. If we are told that something undivinisable is present in the world-elements, we may yet choose to work for the world and look upon the world as valuable because there are also so many God-expressive elements in it, but the deepest self in us will always feel discontented, unappeased, impatient and know that not here is the Grand Terminus of the soul's evolution, the scene of its integral fulfilment. And in the long run the countries where this deepest self is most active will yield, in spite of all theories of the world as *Lila* or God's play, to the theory of the world as *Maya*. India is overshadowed by the *Maya* theory not just because India has lost her ancient vigour: it is also because India is irrepressibly influenced by the deepest self and that perfection-haunted dweller within cannot accept as real whatever fails to admit of total divinisation. Nothing save extreme Shankarite *sannyasa*, nothing save extreme Buddhistic *tyaga* can be the logical result for a spiritual aspirant who accepts an undivinisable factor in our nature's constituents. The pull towards the Beyond, towards utter rejection of the world for a supra-cosmic status cannot be helped—and really should not be opposed if the Divine, the wholly Perfect, is our goal. And yet even Shankara and Buddha with their illusionist attitude were drawn to world-work, to some effort at manifestation of the Spirit, at irradiation of our nature by the Secret Splendour. Here also is an instinct that is innate. But it can have justification only if our nature is really capable of divine irradiation. Between the instinct to withdraw to the Beyond because of our nature's ultimate residue of the undivinisable with its consequent Mayic emptiness and the instinct to illumine our nature as much as possible as though it were something real and not Mayic—between these two instincts the fight must go on, with a trend more and more towards the former because the allure of the aloof Perfection to the dreamer in us of spiritual plenitude is greater than that of the world-intimate imperfect shedding of manifesting light. This fight is the history of Indian spirituality in the past. It can end only if a NEW vision is both entertained and practised—the vision of complete illumination down to the very cells of the body—the vision of the body's utter divinisation!

Can you aver that such a vision has been in the past? Can you quote to me any yogi who has said as the Mother has said: "Physical death is no part

of our programme"?\* Where in any scripture is the assertion that the completely God-realised man has a body which is no longer subject to disease, decay and death and that this body need not be given up because of the operation of any so-called Nature's law or necessity? Great yogis are declared to leave the body and depart from life at will; but this they do in anticipation of the stroke of death and the body they leave is no intrinsically incorruptible substance but generally the seat of some disease or other—cancer of the throat in Ramakrishna, asthma and diabetes in Vivekananda, blood-poisoning in Dayananda. Even that champion hathiyogi, Pavhari Baba, whom Vivekananda was at times sorely tempted by his own ailments to consult and take as master, gave up his corporeal frame because of some affliction that had overtaken it. Never in the past has there been any vision of the thoroughly divinised body, immune even from accidents, as the external support for an integrally divine manifestation. If that vision put forth by Sri Aurobindo is not NEW, and revolutionarily NEW at that, tell me what significance the word NEW has !

You may be sceptical about the probability of so radical a transformation or even argue that it is not desirable. But how can you say that what Sri Aurobindo is asking for is old? Most certainly the transformation he has in mind is not "a statement in another language of the age-old cry of the mystic". It does not stand for merely a purified saintly life—not even for the magnificent selflessness of a Gautama. It is something no mystic has ever wholly dreamed of in a practical positive manner, though some intuition of it has always been vaguely at work behind all our efforts at manifesting the Divine. Despite that faint intuition, no mystic has dared to place in the forefront the transformation such as Sri Aurobindo wants. They may employ the same term but his meaning cannot be theirs. This is so because no mystic had the full organised wide-awake knowledge of what Sri Aurobindo calls the Supermind or Truth-Consciousness nor the active effective experience of its mighty alchemic process. There is a tendency to think that Supermind means only "above the mind" and coincides with what other seers have discovered to be divine levels of being, higher than the mind yet lower than the "Ultimate Transcendent Reality". The Latin word "super", as used by Sri Aurobindo, has a particular significance which emerges with unique force once we look at his table of what is above the mind. He speaks of the Higher Mind, the Illumined Mind, the Intuitive Mind, the Overmind and then the Supermind. The word "super" does not indiscriminately cover all these levels. It acquires, as distinguished from the word "over",

---

\* It must be understood that life's perpetuation for the sake of an unending activity of the unregenerate human ego is not the immortality aimed at. In fact, any perpetuation as such is not desired: what is desired is the Divine in the body and the Divine's inherent deathlessness is part of the body's realisation of Him.

## THE ADVENT

172

a shade of utter supremacy, and in his expositions the Supermind does not do service for merely the highest level of being below the "Ultimate Transcendent Reality" but is part and parcel of that Reality: only, it is the part that is turned towards creation, towards the bringing forth and harmonisation of the truths implicit in the Transcendent for world-play. There are many terms both in western and eastern mysticism which appear on the surface to contain the essence of the Aurobindonian Supermind, but they basically do not. Take the "Nous" of the Neo-Platonists. The Supermind is not this Nous: it is the consciousness of which the Neo-Platonic Nous is a weak, vague and diffuse description. All the planes above the mind are spiritual ones and are a play of luminous unity in a diversity of delight: there is natural to them what I have called in a poem of mine "the shining smile of the one Self everywhere", and they form a pattern and a harmony whose half-lit image-echo we find in our universe. All of them, therefore, are Nous—the consciousness whose multiple singlehood is the formative archetype of things here. The apex of this consciousness is the Overmind. I cannot tell whether Plotinus had a glimpse of the Overmind: perhaps it was his glimpse of it that he put into the poetic account found in his Enneads of the ecstatic interfusion of glorious God-forms in the spiritual world. But all this does not identify Nous with the Supermind. Just as the Overmind, the world of the greatest Gods, seems to be the archetype of our universe, so also the Supermind is the archetype of the "overmental" plane. In other words, as compared to life here the Overmind is perfection; but as compared to what is still beyond, the Overmind is imperfect Nature rounded off in general without a flawless balance and harmony between the One and the Many. The Overmind is not Ignorance: it is Knowledge, yet it is Knowledge on the way to being Ignorance. So the Neo-Platonic Nous is very distant from being "supramental"—and the proof is simply this: complete conscious awareness of the Supermind must mean the awareness and revelation of the chief secret of the Supermind which is that man's entire nature, down to his material substance, can be divinised in an immortal perfect existence on earth. Nor would such awareness and revelation stop short of a spontaneous effort to divinise and immortalise the earth-sheath. The Supermind's essence is the power it possesses to effect a total and integral divinisation. That power could never have been plumbed before, because nobody ever thought it possible to produce so fundamental a change. Not merely is Plotinus's Nous ruled out: even the Vedas and the Upanishads and the Gita were not acquainted with any direct dynamic realisation of the Supermind in relation to terrestrial Nature. They have grand hints and glimmerings of it: the Vedas' *Satyam Ritam Brihati*, the True, the Right, the Vast—the Upanishads' *Vijnana*, the all-comprehensive Knowledge—the Gita's *Purushottama* with *Para-prakriti*, the Supreme Being with His

Super-Nature. But no radically transforming intimacy with it was present. To be uplifted into it in a trance or to be lost in it and pass through its golden gate into the supra-cosmic Unknown or else to work under its glowing guidance from afar and above is not the same thing as to ascend to it and live in it with one's physical eyes open and bring about its progressive descent—as Sri Aurobindo and the Mother do.

The constant day-to-day living in the light of the Supermind and the supramental descent into our whole constitution in order to shape a divine mind, a divine life-force, a divine body: this is the aim and the decisive condition of Sri Aurobindo's yoga. But there is a long and difficult way to go, a hard task of self-consecration, self-purification, self-discipline, a development on many lines and an opening to the Divine Shakti and her working on all the planes to be carried through before this decisive condition can be reached. That an opportunity might be given to others for this long training and process and a nucleus formed of seekers after this great transformation, Sri Aurobindo has let an Ashram grow around him. In this nucleus the seekers have to grow out of the habits and tendencies created by the past opposite trends of human existence, the clinging to the egoistic life and its ignorance and the revolt against life and finally the satisfaction with a half and half spiritual effort and realisation and so make themselves fit for the final movement of an integral and supramental Yoga. A successful formation of such a nucleus is evidently a necessary preliminary condition for the work Sri Aurobindo has undertaken for the world since he aims not only at an individual realisation but at a great collective descent of the highest truth into life and a new power on the earth for the liberation and perfection of mankind.

I may point out further that it is this yoga's newness that is responsible for the length of Sri Aurobindo's labour. Though forty years have passed since he set forth on the *via mystica* and though all the achievements of Jnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Karma Yoga seem compassed and though on the one hand the Nirvana of Buddha and on the other the Tantric awakening of all the occult chakras in the body appear to be realised, Sri Aurobindo still declares that his labour has not come to its end. Do you imagine that a spiritual genius like him has to continue for forty years to nearly attain what others have got within half a dozen years or so? Surely it is clear that he is at a mighty unparalleled job: there is an obvious case for considering his goal momentously new. The period of time taken depends, where spiritual geniuses are concerned, on what their goals are and the goal of Sri Aurobindo is not reached yet because that stupendous thing—the integral descent of the Supermind—has not shown itself utterly in the most outer physical. What has already happened, however, is more significant than anything in the history of Indian spirituality, for only the

## THE ADVENT

last steps in the top-to-toe descent remain and not even the first unprecedented steps that lead to these last have been taken by anyone hitherto. Even before the last hundredth step there must be the sovereign entry into the Supermind with its clear vision of total transformation: can you point to any yogi or rishi who gives signs of that clear vision, leave aside indications of the practice of the full dynamics of the supramental descent? Is there any wonder the disciples of Sri Aurobindo say that this path is new and different?

K. D. SETHNA

*Love the Victor* will manifest when there will be established, through the fivefold *psychological perfection*, (Faith, Sincerity, Devotion, Aspiration and Surrender) the *love of the physical being* for the Divine, and when, through *loving consecration*, there will be complete *faithfulness to the Divine*.

\* \*

*Open with devotion your vital being to Radha's influence and you will get vital peace, the peace which leads to transformation.*

\* \*

*Through peace in the vital aspire for the beginning of realisation.*  
*(Peace in the vital is at once the basis of the aspiration and the condition for the beginning of realisation.)*

THE MOTHER

## *Spirituality and the Modern World*

### IV

TO become conscious of the soul as the true inner Person, the centre of one's being; to become aware of its relation with the wider universal Reality; and above all, to realise the dependence of both on the Supreme Divine, are the fundamentals of knowing through which modern man can emerge out of his ignorance into the Light of the eternal Truth. We have already seen two main currents of modern thought which indicate the general direction of man's greater possibility, and his growth into a wider consciousness. One trend is the seeking inwards and the increasing realisation of an inner realm of being apart from the surface consciousness. The other is, what might be termed, the upward quest, and the growing awareness of a wider intuitive level, which man through his own self-development can himself experience and attain. But we have also seen how both these currents of thought are failing to achieve their preconceived object of uplifting man, or of bringing to him the much-needed Light. This is because modern man has so far ignored the very first principle of his further development and of his ultimate fulfilment,—the principle of first grasping that greater Height which surpasses and transcends his present limited status. For without a firm grasp of the Higher, his attempts to raise himself to those Heights must continually fail. It is only by reaching towards the Divine, and first, grasping that of the divine nature which is closest to man's,—the soul within him, as well as the Truth-plane beyond,—that he will ever achieve the higher ascent. In this endeavour, it is his own inner experience which first brings to him the assurance of the spiritual Light, though it is ultimately the descent of the Grace which makes him aware of and actually partake of this higher and greater Reality.

First let us see what the relation is, between man and this greater Reality,—the world of Light. Ancient spiritual knowledge has revealed that in the whole universal manifestation of the Supreme, including both the seen and unseen, there are basically two Natures,—a higher Nature and a lower. It is the higher Nature which is the divine Nature, the direct manifestation of the Supreme into His triple worlds of Bliss, Consciousness and Existence. The lower Nature, on the other hand, is that which man ordinarily knows as "nature" and includes also much of what he regards as "supernatural". For the supernatural (as distinct from the purely spiritual) is not the true divine Nature, as the primitive mind thought it to

be, but rather the occult workings of a Nature that is hidden beyond the range of man's present limited outlook. The lower Nature, then, is the lowest planes—of Mind, Life and Matter—into which the Supreme had descended, or rather into which He had become involved. For it was in order that Spirit, as soul, should manifest in and through Matter, that it was necessary for Spirit, with its infinite Consciousness, Existence and Delight, to become, through each successive plane, more and more condensed and involved. And it was only at the uttermost extreme, the total involution of the Supreme in the black abyss of the Inconscient, that the turn into the outer manifestation or evolution could come.

These two triple occult planes of Descent, which thus appear as the higher and the lower, are not because of their different natures, separate and discontinuous planes. There is, in fact, a golden link in the chain which joins the lower world eternally to the higher. This link is the Gnostic or Truth Plane,—the Supramental, as Sri Aurobindo as aptly termed it, —which is directly above and beyond man's present mental status. And it is this plane, intimately connected with the divine Nature, which is the true spiritual basis of man's possible divinity. The soul of man in its terrestrial ascent, has already evolved through Matter, Life and latterly Mind. It is now Supermind which impels man's higher ascent. But since the soul is the veritable compressed seed of the Divine, it has concentrated within it the whole higher layers of the divine Nature itself. Thus the soul of man is not only the gateway through which he can experience the Divine, but it is also the very means by which he can open out into and become the higher or Gnostic Being. Just as Matter became the basis of manifestation for the lower nature, so for the divine nature to become manifest in the terrestrial evolution, Supermind must itself become the basis and stuff of a new type of being. This greater development through man's higher evolution, the attainment of spiritual status, is not therefore merely the attainment of a higher status for man only, it must also be the transformation of the entire lower basis of his present existence,—the transmutation of earth-nature and life, as well as of Mind. This is the immensity of the next evolutionary formation of which man is the terrestrial instrument. It is as instrument in God's hand, that he must take the first conscious steps of this gigantic transformation; and this demands his spiritual awakening, turn and total surrender to the Will of the Supreme Divine. If man is indeed to prove himself the true vehicle of this divine revolution in affecting the Supramental descent and transformation on earth, then he must himself first rise to the greatness of the task,—and this again rests on his own soul-emergence. For it is essentially the soul that is the latent though potent instrument of this divine transformation.

There is one fundamental question that now demands to be clarified,

What is spirituality? For the whole basis of the individual effort rests on the full knowledge and acceptance of all that this term implies. Of the higher knowledge and consciousness, which it is man's aim to attain, there are three fundamental entities forming the basis of the higher Reality in relation to the ascent of man. These are, the Psychic being, the Truth plane or Supramental and the Transcendent Divine. Thus the basis of the individual,—the true centre and fulcrum for his own higher ascent—is the soul-entity or psychic being within him. The basis, as we have seen, of the whole higher Nature, is the Truth-plane which is the real spiritual entity. And the fundamental ground of the Divine Himself is the Transcendence. Thus we can see that spirituality is not only the basis of man's next step in his evolutionary ascent, but it is also the central term in his relation with the Supreme Reality. Spirituality is in fact the fundamental link between man's inner soul and the Supreme Divine. It is the bridge on which he can alone base all his efforts for the decisive change and transformation of his baser nature. But it is precisely the ancient foundations of spiritual knowledge, especially the rich roots nurtured in the East, that modern man has swept aside as an anachronism and a redundancy, whereas in fact they are the essential link for his grasping the higher Knowledge and Truth,—God-knowledge as well as self-knowledge and world-knowledge.

It is through his separation from the ancient spiritual knowledge also that modern man has lost the true awareness of his own self-nature. Even though modern psychology has made a tentative beginning in this direction, such probings as have so far been made, have merely unearthed the lowest levels only of man's whole nature. As it was known to the ancient world, the lower nature of man, like the lower universal Nature, is fundamentally three-fold, in which the three grades or planes through which his soul has already evolved, combine to contribute each its own essential element. First there is the element of inertia and opacity, the essence derived from the staticity of Matter itself. Then there is the element of self-seeking impetuous activity,—derived from the kinetic movement inherent in Life. And thirdly there is the element of transparency and comparative purity,—from the aetherial substance of Mind with its greater freedom to more upwards towards the Light. It is really the infinite play or combination of these three fundamental qualities in all their diverse proportions and predominances, which result in the multitudinous diversity of individuals in the world, each with his own particular psychological make-up. Thus, enmeshed in the lower nature, each individual feels himself to be a separate and distinct person from everyone else. But it is merely the interplay of these basic qualities which is unique for him, and for each other individual. In order to experience the truth of this, it is necessary for one to detach oneself from the movements of the lower nature, and to see these movements as acting

apart and distinct from his real essential self. It is indeed in this very act of detachment that one comes into proximity, and can eventually become identified with his own inner spiritual nature. He then experiences the world from a new centre,—not the familiar ego-centre, but the true soul-centre of his being. This double nature in man does not really imply two distinct and irreconcilable fields, or even that one alone is real and the others merely transitory. It is not the sharp division which has been traditionally symbolised by the conception of the Flesh and the Spirit, in which one category belongs to the eternal Evil and must thus be cast off, and the other to the infinite Good. There is in fact a bridge and mediator within man himself which joins into one whole continuity his higher and lower natures. This is the dynamic soul or psychic being; and it is fundamentally this spiritual entity that is the true basis of his divine nature, and of his growth into a higher being.

Although it is the higher Nature which ultimately can effect the transformation of man, there is demanded of man himself the individual effort of maintaining a constant turn towards the Divine Will, and a persistent endeavour which will eventually mould his whole lower nature into a fit instrument and vessel for receiving the divine Grace,—the descent of the Light from above. Without this effort and endeavour, it is apparent from past occurrences of summary illumination and divine ecstasy, that the Grace when it descends even partially, cannot be sustained. There is needed an utter surrender to the Divine Will, a firm grasp of the inner Reality, and a progressive self-growth into the Truth and the Light. It is because this effort is a striving to reach the Divine, and in response, the reaching down of the Divine Himself towards man, that the whole of this endeavour necessarily bears the imprint of the higher Reality itself, the triple character of the threefold higher Nature. It can indeed be seen in the long history of man's spiritual aspiration that three distinct paths of progress have continually reappeared, sometimes separate, sometimes merged. That which has come to man through his effort in the ascent itself,—the touch of Truth and higher consciousness received through Mind,—is the Divine Knowledge, which became in consequence a powerful means or way towards experiencing this greater Consciousness. Secondly that which has come to him through the descent of the divine Grace from the Supreme Height of Bliss, touching his very heart's centre, is divine Love. It was this Love and adoration which became the potent channel for attaining that closeness and intimacy with the Divine Presence which alone can give the living reassurance of God's supreme Reality. And thirdly that which became the root or basis of these two ways,—the work or action to be done in the world,—has emerged from the Will of the Supreme. These three paths,—of knowledge, love and works,—have long been known

to ancient spiritual discipline, though in the actual spiritual accomplishments along them by the Seers and Masters of all times, there have been many travails and endeavours. It was the teaching of the Gita which enunciated clearly the fundamental truth of the essential oneness of these three ways; and which, in fact, laid down the basic principles with which they could be grasped, not as separate or consecutive paths, but as the simultaneous means of one integral movement. Not only is such a foundation of synthesis the most powerful lever for raising man towards a higher status and spiritual growth, but it also contains the essential unity and intimate relation of these three lines of endeavour with their source and origin in the Divine Reality. Although this basis was laid down as long ago as the Gita's final revelation, the subsequent history of spiritual endeavour shows, for the most part, a greater branching and divergence of these three paths,—mainly into separate and individual schools. And even each school itself became a focus for new and diverse ways of endeavour. The ancient synthesis had become lost by this splitting and disintegration, and consequently the whole effort became scattered and correspondingly weaker. It was really with the present-day awakening of Indian spirituality,—the stirring of the dynamic Spirit itself from the bosom of its ancient Mother,—that the significance of the synthesis again began to be realised. How this has culminated in the powerful synthesis of Sri Aurobindo's work, we can see fully presented in his own spiritual achievement. It is this synthesis, in fact, which holds out the radical way for the essential progress and uplift of modern man.

In the first place, the aim of the spiritual endeavour for modern man, is far wider than that laid down in the Gita. For whereas the Gita merely stressed the individual endeavour and liberation to the exclusion of the collective and whole universal salvation, the modern world demands a more integral transformation embracing the world and humanity, as well as the very earth-nature itself. Indeed the very condition of the present-day world is such that a turn towards the Light and the Divine, and a change in man's very nature is the one imperative need of the times. But the change must come from within, as Sri Aurobindo writes, "by the realisation of God in ourselves and the world, and a remoulding of life by that realisation." It is God's Will that is the root and end of all man's endeavour; and the constant striving must be the surrendering of man's narrow egoistic will to the infinite Will of God. In the whole spiritual endeavour, from the moment the soul awakens to its own purpose and status within the individual, this utter surrender to the Divine becomes increasingly essential. For having put oneself in God's hands, the divine working will necessarily stir up all the impurity of the lower nature and it is only an absolute and steadfast faith in the Divine Grace, which springs from an increasing

surrender, that can carry one safely over these difficulties. Since the divine Reality is not just a pure aetherial Spirit, but a manifold Existence, the first experience of this higher Reality as an impersonal existence, is not the only or final one. There is a higher truth in which the Spirit exists in all things, as well as all things existing in the Spirit. And even this realisation is intermediary to the supreme realisation of the Divine Reality,—that the whole world is an expression of an infinite divine personality. Thus though the basis is the impersonal Spirit, and the limbs the universal manifestation, the integral divine vision is the infinite Person, "who draws all of us to Him by His love, compels all of us by His masteries and plays His eternal play of joy and strength and beauty in the manifold world" (Sri Aurobindo). The individual effort is essentially a threefold one,—as we have seen it must indeed be. Firstly there must be the knowledge, awareness and consciousness of the Divine; and a seeing and recognition of His Truth. Secondly there must be the aspiration in the heart for spiritual development and transformation, a self-opening towards the Light and a plasticity of the being in God's hands in all our actions. And thirdly there must be the total surrender to the Will of God, in every movement and every plane of consciousness. This, briefly, is the basic condition of the synthesis for the individual endeavour, that has been laid down for us by Sri Aurobindo.

That all such spiritual endeavour is no alien movement for modern man, but the very need of his future existence, can be seen in the underlying trends of modern thought itself. For it is really modern man who is himself overshadowing the very significance and direction of this movement. Thus, in spite of the distortion and degradation of modern creative expression, there can be seen as its very root and inspiration, the wider tendency to integrate two fundamentals, which are in fact inherent in man's own spiritual path. It is a striving to focus into one integral vision the dual lines of a sympathetic identification or feeling-into things, and a calm impersonal detachment. The very essence of this endeavour is itself the aim of man's spiritual discipline, that of a wider seeing. But it is apparent that modern man is failing utterly to achieve this higher and wider vision. For he has so far failed to realise that such impersonal detachment coupled with insight, must necessarily spring from the inner soul centre, and not from mind. This cardinal error can again be seen more clearly in the present-day trends of modern thought to create a synthesis. For synthesis is essentially a soul-movement, a fundamental condition of the soul. But modern man in his attempt is merely devising a mentally constructed synthesis, which is really a mixture, and no true synthesis. Instead of bringing clarity and light, such thought-constructions are only bringing conflict and confusion. Whereas mind tends to analyse, break up into finitudes and grasp partialities, the soul, being more expansive and penetrating, seeks to grasp the wholeness

as well as the essence of things. It is only in the higher reaches of mind that one can see the beginnings of this function of seizing the wholeness of thought, as, for example, in the intuitive. This striving for synthesis through modern thought, is essentially the straining of soul to impress itself indelibly on the modern mind, so that man may recognise and grasp this central and emergent factor of his being. It is only thus that modern man will create a new vision.

It is now clear that for Soul to become the established base and centre of all man's actions, there must be the turn and aspiration towards the Highest Reality,—the Supreme Divine. And it is clear also that the emergence of Soul and aspiration towards the Divine, both rest on the effort and endeavour of man himself, his own acceptance and embrace of spirituality,—that is, the spiritual knowledge, the spiritual aspiration and the spiritual endeavour which this term implies. It is such integral spirituality, now emerging from the East, that is the real pressing need of this modern age.

N. PEARSON

### *Review*

*Vladimir Solovyov.* By Friedrich Muckermann.

*Nicolas Berdyaev and the New Middle Ages.* By E. Lampert.

THE divinisation of man has been a very ancient dream and aspiration, the earliest preoccupation of man and his inevitable and ultimate pre-occupation. In the latter half of the 19th century we find several prophetic minds formulating the ideal of a divine humanity, and perhaps the most remarkable of them is the great Russian seer, thinker and sage, Vladimir Solovyov. A child of his age, he pretended to be an atheist at the age of twelve. He once wrote to his cousin that his idea was the "work of transforming the world"; and he had never relinquished the idea when he died in 1900 at the early age of forty-seven. It was not Western thought that gave him the idea of divine humanity; he had three visions which enabled him to enter into the mysteries of the spiritual life. The Vision appeared to him for the first time when he was only nine; at the solemn mass on the Feast of the Assumption, he had beheld Her whom he "cannot and will not name." At the age of twenty-two under the dome of the British Museum he had *the* Vision for the second time:

Thrice hast thou shown thee to me face to face,  
No pallid thought fashioned thy living form.

In London the Vision told him to go to Egypt. There he shook off all traces of Western rationalism and empiricism, and continued in his time the word of Divine Humanity begun by the Greek fathers. The Fourth Gospel, the Apocalypse, the Egyptian fathers taught him the art of theurgy, of man as the creator of gods and idols, of Isis identifying herself with the *Terra Aegyptou*, where even the mummies symbolise man's longing for immortality. He aimed at synthetising all knowledge in Christianity. In his "Lectures on Divine Humanity" (1877-81) he gave a statement of his own doctrine.

Western Europe tried to create man without God; the East aspired towards God ignoring man. Therefore the East needs the West and its faith in man; and the West needs the East and its faith in God. Both coalesce in the idea of Divine Humanity. The cosmic forces to which man and his world are exposed here on earth, represent "*die schlechte Unendlichkeit*" (the evil infinity), the *Tohuwabohu*, the chaos. As a spiritual being man bursts the revolving circle of nature. He becomes a citizen of another world, in unity with the Absolute Being from whom he sprang in the creation. Christ incarnates in Himself the two natures of God and man. But if there is a God-man, there is also His reflection, the Man-god, a living organism united with the Deity. Man, therefore, is the centre of the "Other Absolute", of the world which Schelling had described as God's self-representation. He is to respond to God as His other self. Man, then, is the mediator between God and nature. It is his vocation to complete the work of Divine-human redemption; and he is to do this by the incarnation of the wisdom.

To find a philosophical basis for this doctrine he turned to Hegel, the most influential western thinker of modern times. But he claimed to have found out the fundamental errors of Hegel's logic and developed an organic logic and metaphysic of his own. "If I say 'I am' or 'That thought is' I use the parts of the word 'to be' in totally different meanings. In the first proposition, I coordinate the predicate 'be' with a subject; in the second with the predicate of the subject." For Solovyov Being is a universal subject taken in extension; not as Hegel had decreed, in comprehension. Solovyov holds, with Schelling, that our immanent dialectic constitutes an absolute activity, since the notion can only exist in our consciousness, and is therefore after, and not before nature. God is the positive nothing as against Hegel's negative nothing. The distinction between Hegel and Solovyov seems to correspond to the distinction Sri Aurobindo has drawn between the purely noumenal and the idealistic philosophies both of which recognise Mind alone as the creator of the worlds. According to Hegel, the world is only a movement of Thought: if there is an Absolute, it is aloof from all relations and irreconcilable with a world of relations. The idealistic

interpretation of Solovyov supposes a relation between the Truth behind and the concepitive phenomenon in front, a relation which is not merely that of an antinomy and opposition. According to him there is no radical dualism between God and nature. Nature serves as *hypokeimenon* for the Incarnation and for the realization of God. But the universe is a plurality, how can it be reduced to new unity? That is the problem which Solovyov tried to analyse in his "Lectures on Divine Humanity." If, he argues, the plurality of things were absolute, no relation to the Absolute would be possible.

All things, therefore, must be united organically. But the more a being is organically universal, the more it is at the same time individual. "The universal organism, which expresses the absolute content of the divine principle, is *par excellence* an individual, a special being." This reminds us of what Sri Aurobindo has said in The Life Divine: "To find and embody the All-Delight in an intense summary of its manifoldness, to achieve a possibility of the infinite Existence which could not be achieved in other conditions, to create out of Matter a temple of the Divinity would seem to be the task imposed on the spirit born into the material universe." (Vol. II, p. 453). According to Solovyov, this individual being, or the realized expression of the absolute God, is typified in Christ.

He also finds the root of evil in the separative consciousness. "Nature, in its opposition to God, is merely another position or, rather, permutation of certain essential elements which substantially remain in the divine world." But the third sphere of divine existence, the soul originates by creation, and "in so far as the divine will has rallied itself to the ideas, it has ceased to be divine and is being determined by these ideas." While all things in the divine world are integrated, each thing here affirms its particularity and isolation; and in this rupture of the divine context lies the root of evil. Since the world soul is free to choose the object of its longing, it can aspire to possess things in its own name, *eritis sicut Deus*. It so becomes a particular element, dissolves the organism and causes suffering and chaos.

The cosmic process and history are the great drama, the Divine Comedia, in which the potential reintegration of the world-soul with God is rendered actual. The world is a uni-totality in the process of becoming. The first period of the process is achieved with the creation of man. Man, then, is the Absolute in process of becoming. Even the natural man is a theophany. In so far as man received the aptitude to become subject to divine action, history ascends to the scene of theogony. The Incarnation of Christ is the ultimate and crowning event in the process which follows upon a number of preceding theogonies. In him the divine and material elements are united by man's third principle, the purely human. In accordance with orthodox dogma, Solovyov teaches that Christ's divine personality

contains two natures and possesses two wills: "By overcoming the three temptations in the desert, Christ divinises his humanity after having humanised his divinity." It is mankind's task to imitate Christ's incarnation by founding a universal and collective God-manhood, or divine humanity. This will be the real universal Church, for which the Church in history serves as a hallowed vessel, in the process of incarnating divine wisdom.

As the method of achieving this ideal of divine humanity Solovyov developed his ethics first, in the "Critique of Abstract Principles" and later in "The Justification of the Good." As in his logic and metaphysics, Solovyov starts with Hegel but goes beyond him, so also in ethics he starts with Schopenhauer and Kant but goes beyond them and raises ethics to the spiritual plane. According to Schopenhauer, sympathy is the fundamental ethical feeling. The individual will is immoral if it increases the suffering of others, or also if it is merely indifferent toward it. It is moral if it feels another's suffering as its own and seeks to alleviate it. From the standpoint of sympathy Schopenhauer gave his psychological explanation of the ethical life. Solovyov agrees with Schopenhauer that sympathy or pity is the material principle of morality; but this is how it acts in the human level: in the higher spiritual level all truly ethical action is a spontaneous outflow of love which is a much deeper thing than pity. Between 1892 and 1894 Solovyov meditated upon the deepest meaning of love, and described finding it in the restoration of God's image in man in his "The Meaning of Love". God, says the Bible, created man in his own image. By loving man we love God, and the service of man flows spontaneously from that divine love. Thus for him ethics becomes the great art of salvation, the royal road to the *apokatastasis ton panton*. This is the dominant theme of "The Justification of the Good" published fifty years ago.

Solovyov agrees with Kant that suffering consists in the dependence of our will upon something alien, also that freedom of the will constitutes the essence of morality. But their paths part immediately after this promise. According to Kant the freedom of the will consists in not following any external aim or natural impulse but some rule or maxim given *a priori* by the reason. According to Solovyov this is only relative freedom; this moral discipline only helps men to put under control his lower impulses; it implies merely negative limitation of human conduct, for formal reason cannot give the positive content of the good. It is only by rising to a higher consciousness and knowledge that we can know what is the positive good to be pursued in life. "To do what we ought to do presupposes the knowledge of what is." Positivism can never assure man of the basis of his ethics. In order to recognise what is, the separate thing must be seen in its relation to the whole—that is, to the uni-totality. This is a cognition which cannot

be mediated by experience. Truth, therefore, must reside in the Absolute Being alone, and man can have true knowledge only when he enters into communion with God. This Solovyov terms mysticism. In the act of cognition man represents the other self of the Absolute, in which he ascends through the process of divinisation. Cognition is itself part of *Theosis*, the integration of man to God. The idea of divine hypostatis recurs in Solovyov's notion of man. The personal ego holds something other than itself to which it should surrender itself; it is this surrender that constitutes man's transfiguration.

Solovyov tried to extend his theoretical metaphysic into the practical sphere: it ends in the messianic advocacy of the new synthesis in history. Divine humanity will be achieved through the incarnation of divine wisdom and the realisation of uni-totality in becoming is the mission of Russia. Solovyov recognised that Christianity might become the great positive social force of the future, but it was not Dostoevsky's Orthodox Church; he knew that Rome also was needed. During the eighties, the second period of his life, the idea of free theocracy was uppermost in his mind. The Slavophile adherence to nationality as the most effective factor in the philosophy of history was weakened by Leontiev's insistence on Byzantism as the decisive force that moulded the Russian spirit. Dostoevsky, the great teacher of Solovyov, made "The Brothers Karamazov" an ardent plea for the Church as the positive social principle. Federov's "Philosophy of the Common Task" began to stir the minds of the elect with the idea of an active apocalypse, the common work of "raising the dead." The impressions which Solovyov had gained from the revolution in thinking were deepened by events. When Tsar Alexander II was assassinated, Solovyov pleaded in vain for the pardon of the plotters. Doubts concerning Russia's spiritual strength gravely disturbed the philosopher. If the new emperor did not by mercy prove the Christian and superhuman character of his reign, then Russia was not the ideal empire that could sanctify the world by free theocracy; she could only be put on the path towards the goal. But in the last resort it was the desire to realise the work of the incarnation of wisdom that attracted Solovyov towards Rome, since it is by accepting the primacy of this incarnation that Russia will be able to realise the free theocracy which leads to the Kingdom of God as identified with divine wisdom. Here we find Solovyov not as a seer, but as a thinker making all sorts of speculations with his ever active mind. Rome represents in his speculation the divine Sacerdos, Russia the Kingdom; he himself is the prophet who will unite them.

In "La Russie et L'Eglise Universelle" written in 1889, Solovyov expresses his idea concerning the practical work to be accomplished towards the union of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. His application of this

line of thought to Russia's historical mission, and his theocratic messianism in general, are filled with striking speculations. The Messianic force of the West has exhausted itself in two attempts to create God's Kingdom on earth, Constantine's and Charlemagne's. To succeed where the West had failed was Russia's vocation. Solovyov tries to clear Filofie's idea of Moscow the Third Rome, of its nationalistic trappings. He defines Russia's task as that of uniting the first two Romes, Rome and Byzantium, in a synthesis of Social Christianity.

In the nineties certain apocalyptic presentiments took possession of him. His restless mind felt the strain of overwork. A neglect of worldly interests and his unhappy love for Sophia Martinova intensified the crisis. His theocratic ideas had brought him into dangerous proximity to practical politics, so inimical to spiritual life. Theocracy, he found, presupposes the individual's personal sanctification, and this insight led him to the problem of evil. He perceived the atmosphere to be filled, increasingly, with ideas that falsified the good. Marxism started its public career with the facile reduction of all problems to that of social justice and with compulsory unification of mankind as its aim; Nietzsche was the skilful forger of the Pauline idea of the super-man; Tolstoy, the vendor of a pale Christianity that denied the divinity not only of mankind but even of Christ himself.

In 1898 Solovyov travelled to Egypt for the second time. There he had diabolical visions: Anti-Christ appeared to him: he became aware of an acceleration in the march of history. His intense preoccupation with the idea of the good had, by this time, rendered his mind sensitive to contemporary falsification, so that he felt he must expose their fallacies to a credulous mankind. This is the theme of his last work: "War, Progress and the End of History, including a Short Story of the Anti-Christ." Solovyov singles out Tolstoy's tepid Christianity as the special target of attack. Tolstoy held that the Parable of the Husbandmen contains his own main idea: that evil should not be resisted by force.

In "Three Discussions" Solovyov, as Mr. Z. replies to the Prince (Tolstoy), "Evil really exists"; it represents the victory of lower over higher being; it is not a mere "deficiency of the good." To deny it, and to promise its disappearance as the result of some future social or personal behaviour of man—as Tolstoy taught—is the statement of an adversary of Christ, especially since this attitude denies, with the principle itself, the remedy promised and prescribed by Christ, the resurrection of man. If resurrection is not admitted in its central position, then "our (i. e., Tolstoy's) Kingdom of God is but an arbitrary and purposeless euphemism for the kingdom of death." Solovyov alias Mr. Z. reproaches the Tolstoyans for their interpretation of the Parable of the Husbandmen, thus "arbitrarily casting out from the Gospel that which is the most essential part of it;

the reference to the son and heir in the parable in which is given the true standard of relation between man and God." God, our Lord, must be a living Lord who does good deeds himself, "not a remote Incognoito.... the God of this age."

Solovyov feared that Tolstoy's deceptive attraction, and that of other religious innovators would in our time and for large parts of mankind prove too strong. The coming Anti-Christ would incarnate all these false teachings about God and man. He would appear as the benefactor of mankind. Solovyov's idea of the Anti-Christ was simple; the general union of mankind was man's highest earthly aim in preparation of his redemption; but achieved without God it represented the deepest possible falsification of the good. Believing, then, that the Incarnation of Wisdom was impossible in this our aeon of history, Solovyov felt that he had nothing left to achieve on earth. He retired to a friend's estate near Moscow, received Extreme Unction from Father Belyaev, an Orthodox priest, and employed the last hours of his life in prayer for the Jews. He died in July 31, 1900.

The writer of this illuminating biography, Father Muckermann, met the real Anti-Christ when undergoing persecution at the hands of the Nazis in Germany; and with the destruction of Hitler he felt justified in hoping that the day of the Lord was near. Solovyov himself expected that it would come by Christianity becoming a great positive social force through the reunion of the Orthodox and the Roman Churches. He felt that without this union, Russia would be too weak to undertake the spiritual unification of mankind and to realize Divine Humanity on earth. If she tries she will become Anti-Christ, who is said to deceive even the elect. She will spoil her mission and leave mankind as disunited as before. Only a strong social Christianity will unite mankind, and without the total absorption of Russia's schismatic dreams into this Divine Body on earth, nothing will be accomplished for the greater happiness of the human race. The message of Nietzsche was thus perverted by Hitler and the message of Marx seems on the way of being similarly perverted today.

Nicolas Berdyaev, a distinguished disciple of Solovyov, has continued the work of his master; with the doctrine of the divine humanity he amalgamates different currents of modern thought: "Feuerbach's and Marx's struggle against man's absorption into illusory religious and socio-economic relations; Nietzsche's depreciation of legalist morals and his idea that man should be more than man, the idea which, for Berdyaev, is nothing but a modern and possibly too bold formulation of Pauline theology; and finally Freud's psycho-analysis which, if reduced to its true proportions, is reconcilable with the Christian teaching regarding man's fallen and contradictory nature. Berdyaev does not take into account how the conception of a divine humanity has become the subject of great poetic utterance in our

time. Thus referring to the one crucial movement necessary for man before he can reach that perfection which the race shall have on its heights, Meredith writes,

The vile plucked out of them, the unholy slain,  
Not forfeiting the beast with which they are crossed,  
To stature of the Gods they shall attain.

In the early twenties, that is, the inter-war period of great ideological fluctuation Nicolas Berdyaev seemed to emerge from the chaos as the mediator between East and West, the prophet of a New Age. In his book *The End of our Times*, he prophesies the breakdown of modern civilisation, because he can find no meaning in any life in which the central principle is not a mystic communion with God. He loathes alike the acquisitiveness of capitalist society and the heathenism of communist Russia.

For Berdyaev, as much as for his teacher Solovyov, the world is the "Absolute in becoming" and man is potentially God. These ideas can be based upon Scriptural promises, e.g. "this mortal must put on immortality" "mortality swallowed up of life" "our bodies in humiliation shall be changed and conformed to His body of glory". But few except the few eminent Catholic divines, such as Matthias Scheeben (in his interpretation of St. Paul, he says, "Man is of Divine Race"), have drawn from them far-reaching conclusions that Solovyov and his followers deem reconcilable with Christianity.

A. B.

Le Directeur : P. Counouma  
Printed at 'Imprimerie de Sri Aurobindo Ashram,' Pondicherry and  
published by P. Counouma. To be had of : Sri Aurobindo Library,  
369, Esplanade, Madras.

Vol. IV. No. 4

November 1947



The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda.

Sri Aurobindo.

## EDITORIALS\*

### PHYSICIAN, HEAL THYSELF

IT is not that humanity does not know or feel the need of a radical change in itself. Everywhere man recognises that if the problems and difficulties that face him have to be solved satisfactorily, there must be a thorough overhauling of his outlook and nature; no mere tinkering with the superficial signs and symptoms of an organic disease by means of palliatives and expediencies and nostrums, but a major operation. Indeed, if he wishes to be cured, he must transcend his present nature and be something else.

And yet he does not change. He has not the sincere will to change. At least he takes the wrong way about it. And the reason is that he does not whole-heartedly adopt the course which he knows to be the only right thing. He is divided in his being: one part knows indeed, but another, the larger, the dynamic part does not profit by that knowledge, ignores it and pursues a contrary path, the accustomed groove of ignorance and *laissez-faire*.

He consoles and comforts himself, lays the flattering unction to his soul by taking to a less exacting ideal, a substitute without tears, as it were. Therefore he looks outside, seeks to reform society, changing its laws and constitution, and wants to believe that in that way society can be remodelled and mankind transformed.

It should have been proved beyond doubt by now that the fact is not so. The only way to cure the world outside is to cure oneself first inside. The ancient proverb still holds good: the macrocosm is only an enlargement

\* Based upon talks with the Mother.

of the microcosm, the microcosm is the macrocosm in miniature. The universe is a transcript, a projection on a large scale of the individual nature within. What is there is here and what is not here is not found there. When we see some wrong in the world, something that has got to be set right, instead of rushing out and trying to tackle it in the external field, if one were to hold oneself back and look within, one would surely find, perhaps to his surprise and enlightenment, a very similar movement, often an exact replica in one's own consciousness and character of what one finds in the larger anonymous movements of nature and society. Now it may be admitted that one has no control or almost none over nature; the outside world is beyond our reach and we cannot order or mould it as we like. But the smaller world which is ourselves is not too far or too great for us; our own individual nature and character is ours and we have been given sufficient freedom and power to reform, renew, remake it. That is the secret, although it seems to be a very simple truth, almost a truism.

And if we cannot correct and mould as we wish the little world within which is our own, how can we expect to correct or change the vaster outer world? To leave oneself to be as one is and to try to make others change is evidently an absurd and self-contradictory proposition. On the other hand, if the first thing that one does is to correct oneself, then one will find, much to one's surprise and satisfaction, that there is very little to correct in the world, everything has been already corrected automatically.

Each man is given his little domain within him and he is master of that domain. Nobody is given more (or less even) than what he can successfully manage: the charge is accurately measured according to capacity. One can be indeed a *roi fainéant*, if one chooses to be so; but that is not man's inevitable destiny; he can truly be the ruling king and exercise, to the full, his authority. It is a simple truth that man has a will and can wield it. This will he can consciously develop, increase and enlarge, make it an extremely powerful, if not invincible, instrument for action.

Will is a twofold power: it is energy and it is light. True will, will in essential purity, that is to say, when one is perfectly sincere and determined to follow up one's sincerity, impels rightly and impels infallibly. The consciousness is there of the right thing to do and the energy is also there inherent in that consciousness to work it out inevitably. There is a will belonging to a lower level of the mind which is only a variant of wish, and in reference to that only it is said that even if the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak. This will is a light, but without the fire that vivifies: and that is because there is a division in the consciousness, "one can love and yet one can betray", (in the words of a famous novelist).

But, as we have already said, man is not condemned to this malady of schizophrenia: he is not by nature a Manichean creature. He is whole and

entire in his inner reality and true consciousness and he can assert his integrality: he has the freedom and the power to do so—he has to and will do so, since it is not merely a possibility but an inevitability that is to come about in the course of his growth and evolution.

And when he has done so, when he has salvaged himself, by that he will have salvaged the world too around him. The measure of the success within will be the measure of the success without.

### THE MEASURE OF TIME

When it is said that the Realisation is decreed, is it meant also that the time for it has been fixed? If so, all individual effort and freedom of action seem to go out of the picture, being irrelevant—neither hastening nor retarding the process. The fact is somewhat different, not so simple and trenchant.

There is very little sense in the common notion that everything is pre-determined as to the time when it will happen, that the universal scheme has been all inalterably arranged and mapped out from beforehand, that nothing can change it, all goes according to plan. This is only a human conception, a construction of the mind, a wrong translation in the brain of some fact which is otherwise and elsewhere. The mind divides where there is no division, puts things against each other where there is perfect compatibility and harmony. Determinism and Indeterminism, Free-Will and Mechanism are contradictions set up by the mind and have no real objective existence. From a certain view-point, on a certain level of consciousness things appear to move in a rigid frame of mechanistic determinism; from another view-point, on another level, things seem to possess absolute freedom.

Looked at from the higher source of things, the time-factor itself appears as an illusion. What is true is a certain set of conditions in which forces work themselves out. And in this pattern of conditions, time (along with space) does not give the absolute and fixed frame of reference, as is usually taken for granted, but is a varying background, even if it is not a side-issue or a by-product. The conscious force at work in the world aims at change in the conditions: it is a work primarily of rearrangement and order. The state of Nature, of actuality—of ignorance and inertia—is one of chaos. What the Divine Will behind, the Consciousness standing over, does is to develop a cosmos out of that chaos. Things are placed wrongly, at random, pell-mell: they have to be assorted, arranged, docketed, each item in its own place. We know, for example, of the material particle in which the atoms are huddled together, each pointing to a different direction, but

when they are arranged in such a way that one half point in one way and the other half the contrary way, we have what is called a magnetised body.

It is when things are arranged in this manner, the right thing in the right place, that divine perfection, the Realisation in the material, is attained. And for this consummation to come about, the process that is followed is a greater and greater infiltration of higher and higher forces into the field of disorder, of our normal life and consciousness. The time taken simply indicates that the process is being worked out; it is an expression of the rhythm of procedure. But to the Divine, the Supreme Consciousness that works, time itself has no separate meaning or intrinsic value; for it a thousand or a million years do not mean more than what is one moment for us. Indeed, the slowness of time simply marks the steps of events in the lower ranges of creation: as we rise higher and higher, forces from there come down into the lower field, and the tempo of events quickens; finally, when the highest peak is attained and its forces descend and intervene in the ordering of the lowest levels, then the change, the arrangement that is being worked out, is accomplished immediately and without delay: the time lag is abolished altogether. Time may be compared to a kind of elastic bond connecting the highest and the lowest and running through the intermediate zones. It contracts as one moves upward and is telescoped, as it were, at the top.

#### MAN THE PROTOTYPE

The earth has been created for a special purpose; it has a divine role to fulfil. And so there is only one earth and not many, in spite of what the scientists may say. The earth is not a mass of dead matter, not merely the dwelling-place of the growths that have occurred upon it, of plants and animals and men. She is the home and she is the mother of them all. She has a consciousness and a personality, the outer form that we see is only her body.

Indeed, all the luminaries of heaven have each its conscious personality, the planets, the moon and above all the great sun. It is not fancy or idle imagination that made the astrologers ascribe definite influences to these heavenly bodies. In Hindu astrology, for example, they are considered as real persons, each with a definite form and character, a *dhyana rupa*. The so-called Nature-gods in the Vedas or in ancient mythology generally are in the same way not creations of mere poetic imagination: they are realities, more real in a sense than the real objects that represent and incarnate them.

Not only so. Our limited mind and senses are accustomed to view and recognise individuals alone as persons. But there are group personalities too. Thus each species has a generic personality, a consciousness and an ideal or

intrinsic form also: the individuals on the physical plane are its various incarnations, projections and formations. Old Plato was not so naïve, as we of today are apt to believe, when he spoke of the real reality of general ideas. The attributes, qualities and functions of the generic personality are the source and pattern of what the individuals that form the group actually are. The group person is the king, he is also the body of the Dharma ruling the domain. Any change in the law of being of the group person is necessarily translated in a similar change in the nature and activity of the individuals of the species. What evolutionists describe as sudden variation or mutation and whose cause or genesis they are at a loss to trace, is precisely due to an occult change in the consciousness and will of the group soul.

Man too as a species has a generic personality, his prototype. Only, in opposition to the scientific view, that is an earlier phenomenon belonging to the very origin of things. Man in his essential form and reality is found at the source and beginning of creation. When the unmanifest Transcendent stoops to manifest, when there is the first expression of typal variations in the infinite as the basis of physical creation, then and there appears Man in his essential and eternal divine form. He is there almost as a sentinel, guarding the passage from the formless to form. Indeed, he is the first original form of the formless. A certain poet says that man is the archetype of all living forms. A bird is a flying man, a fish a swimming man, a worm a crawling man, even a plant is but a rooted man. His form belongs to a region beyond even the first principles of creation. The first principles that bring out and shape and uphold the manifested universe are the trinity: Life, Light and Delight—in other terms, Sachchidananda. The whole complex of the manifest universe is resolvable into that unity of triple status. But behind even this supernal, further on towards the final disappearance into the absolute Unmanifest—summing up, as it were, in him the whole manifestation—stands this original primordial form, this first person, this archetypal Man.

The essential appearance of Man is, as we have said, the prototype of the actual man. That is to say, the actual man is a projection, even though a somewhat disfigured projection, of the original form; yet there is an essential similarity of pattern, a commensurability between the two. The winged angels, the cherubs and seraphs are reputed to be ideal figures of beauty, but they are nothing akin to the Prototype, they belong to a different line of emanation, other than that of the human being. We may have some idea of what it is like by taking recourse to the distinction that Greek philosophers used to make between the formal and the material cause of things. The prototype is the formal reality hidden and imbedded in the material reality of an object. The essential form is made of the original configuration of primary vibrations that later on consolidate and become a compact mass, arriving finally at its dense physico-chemical composition. A subtle yet

perfect harmony of vibrations forming a living whole is what the prototype essentially is. An artist perhaps is in a better position to understand what we have been labouring to describe. The artist's eye is not confined to the gross physical form of an object, even the most realistic artist does not hold up the mirror to Nature in that sense: he goes behind and sees the inner contour, the subtle figuration that underlies the external volume and mass. It is that that is beautiful and harmonious and significant, and it is that which the artist endeavours to bring out and fix in a system or body of lines and colours. That inner form is not the outer visible form and still it is that form fundamentally, essentially. It is that and it is not that. We may add another analogy to illustrate the point. Pythagoras, for example, spoke of numbers being realities, the real realities of all sensible objects. He was evidently referring to the basic truth in each individual and this truth appeared to him as a number, the substance and relation that remain of an object when everything concrete and superficial is extracted—or abstracted—out of it. A number to him is a quality, a vibration, a quantum of wave-particles, in the modern scientific terminology, a norm. The human prototype can be conceived as something of the category of the Pythagorean number.

The conception of the Purusha at the origin of things, as the very source of things, so familiar to the Indian tradition, gives this high primacy to the human figure. We know also of the cosmic godhead cast in man's mould—although with multiple heads and feet—visioned and hymned by sages and seers. The gods themselves seem to possess a human frame. The Upanishads say that once upon a time the gods looked about for a proper body to dwell in, they were disappointed with all others; it is only when the human form was presented that they exclaimed, "This is indeed a perfect form, a perfect form indeed." All that indicates the feeling and perception that there is something eternal and transcendent in the human body-frame.

#### THE ROLE OF EVIL

The advent or the presence of evil upon earth has introduced certain factors in human life that have enriched it, increased even its value. Certain experiences would not have been there, intimate and revelatory experiences, but for this Dark Shadow. One can, of course, conceive a line of growth and development in which it is all light and delight, everything is good and for the good. But then a whole domain of experience and realisation would have been missed. There are certain experiences that one would not like not to have had at all, even though that may mean paying and paying heavily.

Evil is evil, no doubt; it is not divine and it is not an illusion. It is a real blot on the fair face of creation. Its existence cannot be justified in the sense that it is the right thing and has to be welcomed and maintained, since it forms part of the universal symphony. Not even in the sense that it is a test and a trial set by the Divine for the righteous to prove their merit. It has not been put there with a set purpose, but that once given, it has been the occasion of a miracle, it offered the opportunity for the manifestation of something unique, great and grandiose, marvellous and beautiful. The presence of evil moved the Divine—*Justizia mosse il mio alto Fattore*—and Grace was born. He descended, the Aloof and the Transcendent, in all his love and compassion down into this vale of tears: he descended straight into our midst without halting anywhere in the infinite gradation that marks the distance between the highest and the lowest, he descended from the very highest into the very lowest, demanding nothing, asking for no condition whatsoever from the soul in Ignorance, from the earth under the grip of evil. Thus it was that Life lodged itself in the home of death, Light found its way into the far cavern of obscurity and conscience, and Delight bloomed in the core of misery. Hope was lit, a flame rising from the nether gloom towards the Dawn. But for the spirit of denial we would not have seen this close and intimate figure of the gracious Mother.

This is the divine miracle that has been vouchsafed to man, the spectacle of the Divine himself becoming an earthly creature, wearing as his own body of flesh and blood this mortal frame of pain and suffering and ignorance, of obscurity and incapacity and falsehood. This is the calvary he has accepted, the sacrifice of his divinity he agreed to in order that this undivine too may gracefully serve the Divine, be taken up and transmuted into the reality from which it fell, of which it is an aberration.

The glory and beauty of this gesture one would not like not to have witnessed and experienced and shared.

## SAVITRI

### BOOK ONE CANTO FOUR\*

#### THE SECRET KNOWLEDGE

ON a height he stood that looked towards greater heights.  
Our early approaches to the Infinite  
Are sunrise splendours on a marvellous verge  
While lingers yet unseen the glorious sun.  
What now we see is a shadow of what must come.  
The earth's uplook to a remote unknown  
Is a preface only of the epic climb  
Of human soul to an eternal state.  
This world is a beginning and a base  
Where Life and Mind erect their structured dreams;  
An unborn Power must build reality.  
A deathbound littleness is not all we are:  
Immortal our forgotten vastnesses  
Await discovery in our summit selves;  
Unmeasured breadths and depths of being are ours.  
Akin to the ineffable secrecy,  
Mystic, eternal in unrealised Time,  
Neighbours of Heaven are Nature's altitudes.  
To these high-raised dominions of the Self  
Too far from surface Nature's postal routes,  
Too lofty for our mortal lives to breathe,  
Deep in us are responding elements.  
Even when we fail to look into our souls  
And lie embedded in earthly consciousness,  
Still are there parts that grow towards the Light,  
Yet are there luminous tracts and heavens serene  
And Eldoradoes of splendour and ecstasy  
And temples to the Godhead none can see.  
And sometimes, when our sight is turned within,

\* Cantos 1-3 were published in Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual, Calcutta,  
1946 and 1947.

Earth's ignorant veil is lifted from our eyes;  
There is a short miraculous escape.  
This fringe of clamped experience left behind,  
Our souls can visit in great lonely hours  
Still regions of imperishable Light,  
All-seeing eagle-peaks of silent Power  
And moon-flame oceans of swift fathomless Bliss  
And calm immensities of spirit Space.  
In the unfolding process of the Self  
Sometimes the inexpressible Mystery  
Elects a human vessel of descent.  
A breath comes down from a supernal air,  
A presence is borne, a guiding Light awakes,  
A stillness falls upon the instruments:  
Fixed sometimes like a marble monument,  
Stone-calm, the body is a pedestal  
Supporting a figure of eternal Peace.  
Or a revealing Force sweeps blazing in;  
Out of some vast superior continent  
Knowledge breaks through trailing its radiant seas,  
And Nature trembles with the power, the flame.  
A greater Personality sometimes  
Possesses us which yet we know is ours:  
Or we adore the Master of our souls.  
Then the small bodily ego thins and falls;  
No more insisting on its separate self,  
Losing the punctilio of its separate birth,  
It leaves us one with Nature and with God.  
In moments when the inner lamps are lit  
And the life's cherished guests are left outside,  
Our spirit sits alone and speaks to its gulfs.  
A wider consciousness opens then its doors;  
Invading from spiritual silences  
A ray of the timeless Glory stoops awhile  
To commune with our seized illumined clay  
And leaves its huge white stamp upon our lives.  
In the oblivious field of mortal mind,  
Revealed to the closed prophet eyes of trance  
Or in some deep internal solitude  
Witnessed by a strange immaterial sense,  
The signals of eternity appear.  
The truth mind could not know unveils its face,

## THE ADVENT

We hear what mortal ears have never heard,  
We feel what earthly sense has never felt,  
We love what common hearts repel and dread;  
Our minds hush to a bright Omniscent;  
A Voice calls from the chambers of the Soul;  
We meet the ecstasy of the Godhead's touch  
In golden privacies of immortal fire.  
These signs are native to a larger self  
That lives within us by ourselves unseen;  
Only sometimes a holier influence comes,  
A tide of mightier surgings bears our lives  
And a diviner Presence moves the soul.  
Or through the earthly coverings something breaks,  
A grace and beauty of spiritual light,  
The murmuring tongue of a celestial fire.  
Ourself and a high stranger whom we feel,  
It is and acts unseen as if it were not;  
It follows the line of sempiternal birth,  
Yet seems to perish with its mortal frame.  
Assured of the Apocalypse to be,  
It reckons not the moments and the hours;  
Great, patient, calm it sees the centuries pass,  
Awaiting the slow miracle of our change  
In the sure deliberate process of world force  
And the long march of all-revealing Time.  
It is the origin and the master-clue,  
A Silence overhead, an inner Voice,  
A living image seated in the heart,  
An unwalled wideness and a fathomless point,  
The truth of all these cryptic shows in space,  
The Real towards which our strivings move,  
The secret grandiose meaning of our lives.  
A treasure of honey in the combs of God,  
A Splendour burning in a tenebrous cloak,  
It is our glory of the flame of God,  
Our golden fountain of the world's delight,  
An immortality cowled in the cape of death,  
The shape of our unborn divinity.  
It guards for us our fate in depths within  
Where sleeps the eternal seed of transient things.  
Always we bear in us a magic key  
Concealed in life's hermetic envelope.

A burning witness in the sanctuary  
Regards through Time and the blind walls of Form;  
A timeless Light is in his hidden eyes;  
He sees the secret things no words can speak  
And knows the goal of the unconscious world  
And the heart of the mystery of the journeying years.

But all is screened, subliminal, mystical;  
It needs the intuitive heart, the inward turn,  
It needs the power of a spiritual gaze.  
Else to our waking mind's small moment look  
A goalless voyage seems our dubious course  
Some Chance has settled or hazarded some will,  
Or a Necessity without aim or cause  
Unwillingly compelled to emerge and be.  
In this dense field where nothing is plain or sure,  
Our very being seems to us questionable,  
Our life a vague experiment, the soul  
A flickering light in a strange ignorant world,  
The earth a brute mechanic accident,  
A net of death in which by chance we live.  
All we have learned appears a doubtful guess,  
The achievement done a passage or a phase  
Whose further end is hidden from our sight,  
A chance happening or a fortuitous fate.  
Out of the unknown we move to the unknown.  
Ever surround our brief existence here  
Grey shadows of unanswered questionings;  
The dark Inconscient's signless mysteries  
Stand up unsolved behind Fate's starting line;  
An aspiration in the Night's profound,  
Seed of a perishing body and half-lit mind,  
Uplifts its lonely tongue of conscious fire  
Towards an undying Light for ever lost.  
Only it hears, sole echo of its call,  
The dim reply in man's unknowing heart  
And meets, not understanding why it came  
Or for what reason is the suffering here,  
God's sanction to the paradox of life  
And the riddle of the Immortal's birth in Time.  
Along a path of aeons serpentine  
In the coiled blackness of her nescient course

## THE ADVENT

The Earth-Goddess toils across the sands of Time.  
A Being is in her whom she hopes to know,  
A Word speaks to her heart she cannot hear,  
A Fate compels whose form she cannot see.  
In her unconscious orbit through the Void  
Out of her mindless depths she strives to rise,  
A perilous life her gain, a struggling joy;  
A Thought that can conceive but hardly knows  
Arises slowly in her and creates  
The idea, the speech that labels more than it lights;  
A trembling gladness that is less than bliss  
Invades from all this beauty that must die.  
Alarmed by the sorrow dragging at her feet  
And conscious of the high things not yet won,  
Ever she nurses in her sleepless breast  
An inward urge that takes from her rest and peace.  
Ignorant and weary and invincible  
She seeks through the soul's war and quivering pain  
The pure perfection her marred nature needs,  
A breath of Godhead on her stone and mire.  
A faith she craves that can survive defeat,  
The sureness of a love that knows not death,  
The radiance of a truth for ever sure.  
A light grows in her, she assumes a voice,  
Her state she learns to read and the act she has done,  
But the one needed truth eludes her grasp,  
Herself and all of which she is the sign.  
An inarticulate whisper drives her steps  
Of which she feels the force but not the sense;  
A few rare intimations come as guides,  
Immense divining flashes cleave her brain,  
And sometimes in her hours of dream and muse  
The truth that she has missed looks out on her  
As if far off and yet within her soul.  
A change comes near that flees from her surmise  
And, ever postponed, compels attempt and hope,  
Yet seems too great for mortal hope to dare.  
A vision meets her of supernal Powers  
That draw her as if mighty kinsmen lost  
Approaching with estranged great luminous gaze.  
Then is she moved to all that she is not  
And stretches arms to what was never hers.

Outstretching arms to the unconscious Void,  
Passionate she prays to invisible forms of Gods  
Soliciting from dumb Fate and toiling Time  
What most she needs, what most exceeds her scope,  
A Mind unvisited by illusion's gleams,  
A Will expressive of soul's deity,  
A strength not forced to stumble by its speed,  
A Joy that drags not sorrow as its shade.  
For these she yearns and feels them destined hers:  
Heaven's privilege she claims as her own right.  
Just is her claim the all-witnessing Gods approve,  
Clear in a greater light than reason owns:  
Our intuitions are its title-deeds;  
Our souls accept what our blind thoughts refuse.  
Earth's winged chimeras are Truth's steeds in Heaven,  
The impossible God's sign of things to be.  
But few can look beyond the present state  
Or overleap this matted hedge of sense.  
All that transpires on earth and all beyond  
Are parts of an illimitable plan.  
The One keeps in his heart and knows alone.  
Our outward happenings have their seed within,  
And even this random Fate that imitates Chance,  
This mass of unintelligible results,  
Are the dumb graph of truths that work unseen:  
The laws of the Unknown create the known.  
The events that shape the appearance of our lives  
Are a cipher of subliminal quiverings  
Which rarely we surprise or vaguely feel,  
Are an outcome of suppressed realities  
That hardly rise into material day:  
They are born from the spirit's sun of hidden powers  
Digging a tunnel through emergency.  
But who shall pierce into the cryptic gulf  
And learn what deep necessity of the soul  
Determined casual deed and consequence?  
Absorbed in a routine of daily acts,  
Our eyes are fixed on an external scene;  
We hear the crash of the wheels of Circumstance  
And wonder at the hidden cause of things.  
Yet a foreseeing Knowledge might be ours,  
If we could take our spirit's stand within,

## THE ADVENT

If we could hear the muffled daemon voice.  
Too seldom is the shadow of what must come  
Cast in an instant on the secret sense  
Which feels the shock of the invisible,  
And seldom in the few who answer give  
The mighty process of the cosmic Will  
Communicates its image to our sight,  
Identifying the world's mind with ours.  
Our range is fixed within the crowded arc  
Of what we observe and touch and thought can guess  
And rarely dawns the light of the Unknown  
Waking in us the prophet and the seer.  
The outward and the immediate are our field,  
The dead past is our background and support;  
Mind keeps the soul prisoner, we are slaves to our acts;  
We cannot free our gaze to reach wisdom's sun.  
Inheritor of the brief animal mind,  
Man, still a child in Nature's mighty hands,  
In the succession of the moments lives;  
To a changing present is his narrow right;  
His memory stares back at a phantom past,  
The future flees before him as he moves;  
He sees imagined garments, not a face.  
Armed with a limited precarious strength,  
He saves his fruits of work from adverse chance.  
A struggling ignorance is his wisdom's mate.  
He waits to see the consequence of his acts,  
He waits to weigh the certitude of his thoughts,  
He knows not what he shall achieve or when;  
He knows not whether at last he shall survive,  
Or end like the mastodon and the sloth  
And perish from the earth where he was king.  
He is ignorant of the meaning of his life,  
He is ignorant of his high and splendid fate.  
Only the Immortals on their deathless heights  
Dwelling beyond the walls of Time and Space,  
Masters of living, free from the bonds of Thought,  
Who are overseers of Fate and Chance and Will  
And experts of the theorem of world-need,  
Can see the Idea, the Might that change Time's course,  
Come maned with light from undiscovered worlds,  
Hear, while the world toils on with its deep blind heart,

The galloping hooves of the unforeseen event,  
Bearing the superhuman rider, near  
And, impassive to earth's din and startled cry,  
Return to the silence of the hills of God;  
As lightning leaps, as thunder sweeps, they pass  
And leave their mark on the trampled breast of Life.  
Above the world the world-creators stand,  
In the phenomenon see its mystic source.  
These heed not the deceiving outward play,  
They turn not to the moment's busy tramp,  
But listen with the still patience of the Unborn  
For the slow footsteps of far Destiny  
Approaching through huge distances of Time,  
Unmarked by the eye that sees effect and cause,  
Unheard mid the clamour of the human plane.  
Attentive to an unseen Truth they seize  
A sound as of invisible augur wings,  
Voices of an unplumbed significance,  
Mutterings in the brooding core of Matter's sleep.  
In the heart's profound audition they can catch  
The murmurs lost by life's uncaring ear,  
A prophet-speech in thought's omniscient trance.  
Above the illusion of the hopes that pass,  
Behind the appearance and the overt act,  
Behind the clock-work chance and vague surmise,  
Amid the wrestle of force, the trampling feet,  
Across the triumph, fighting and despair,  
They see the Bliss for which earth's heart has cried,  
On the long road which cannot see its end  
Wind undetected through the sceptic days  
And to meet it guide the unheedful moving world.  
Thus will the masked Transcendent mount his throne.  
When darkness deepens strangling the earth's breast  
And man's corporeal mind is the only lamp,  
As a thief's in the night shall be the covert tread  
Of one who steps unseen into his house.  
A Voice ill-heard shall speak, the soul obey,  
A power into mind's inner chamber steal,  
A charm and sweetness open life's closed doors  
And beauty conquer the resisting world,  
The truth-light capture Nature by surprise,  
A stealth of God compel the heart to bliss

And earth grow unexpectedly divine.  
In Matter shall be lit the spirit's glow,  
In body and body kindle the sacred birth;  
Night shall awake to the anthem of the stars,  
The days become a happy pilgrim march,  
Our will a force of the Eternal's power,  
And thought the rays of a spiritual sun.  
A few shall see what none yet understand;  
God shall grow up while the wise men talk and sleep;  
For man shall not know the coming till its hour  
And belief shall be not till the work is done.

A consciousness that seeks for its own truth  
Between the being's dark and luminous ends  
Moves here in a half-light that seems the whole.  
An interregnum in Reality  
Cuts off the integral Thought, the total Power;  
It circles or stands in a vague interspace,  
Doubtful of its beginning and its close,  
Or runs upon a road that has no end;  
Far from the original Dusk, the final Flame  
In some huge void Inconscience it lives,  
Like a thought persisting in a wide emptiness.  
As if an unintelligible phrase  
Suggested a million renderings to the Mind,  
It lends a purport to the random world.  
A conjecture leaning upon doubtful proofs  
Or a message confused is all that it can speak,  
Or a portion of the universal word.  
It leaves two giant letters void of sense  
While without sanction turns the middle sign  
Carrying an enigmatic universe,  
As if a present without future or past  
Repeating the same revolution's whirl  
Turned on its axis in its own Inane.  
Thus is the meaning of creation veiled;  
For without context reads the cosmic page:  
Its signs stare at us like an unknown script,  
Like a foreign tongue in its parable sublime.  
It wears to the perishable creature's eyes  
The grandeur of a useless miracle;  
Wasting itself that it may last for a while

Like a fire in the Night is its mighty action's blaze.  
This is our deepest need to join once more  
What now is parted, opposite and twain,  
Remote in sovereign spheres that never meet  
Or fronting like far poles of Night and Day.  
We must fill the immense lacuna we have made,  
Re-wed the closed finite's lonely consonant  
With the open vowels of Infinity,  
Their hyphen isthmus the ascending soul,  
Recall to Mind the lost divine Idea,  
Reconstitute the perfect word, unite  
The Alpha and the Omega in one sound;  
Then shall the spirit and Nature be at one.  
Two are the ends of the mysterious plan.  
In the wide signless ether of the Self,  
In the unchanging Silence white and nude,  
Aloof, resplendent like gold dazzling suns  
Veiled by the Ray no mortal eye can bear,  
The Spirit's free and absolute potencies  
Burn in the solitude of the thoughts of God.  
A rapture and a radiance and a hush  
Delivered from the approach of wounded hearts,  
Denied to the Idea that looks at grief,  
Remote from the Force that cries out in its pain,  
In his inalienable bliss they live.  
Immaculate in self-knowledge and self-power,  
Calm they repose on the eternal Will.  
Only his law they count and him obey;  
They have no goal to reach, no aim to serve.  
Implacable in their timeless purity,  
All barter or bribe of worship they refuse;  
Unmoved by cry of revolt and ignorant prayer  
They reckon not our virtue and our sin,  
They bend not to the voices that implore,  
They hold no traffic with error and its reign:  
They are guardians of the silence of the Truth,  
They are keepers of the immutable decree.  
A deep surrender is their source of might,  
A still identity their way to know,  
Motionless is their action like a sleep.  
At peace, regarding the trouble beneath the stars,  
Deathless, watching the works of Death and Chance,

## THE ADVENT

Immobile, seeing the millenniums pass  
Untouched while the long map of Fate unrolls,  
They look on our struggle with impartial eyes,  
And yet without them cosmos could not be.  
Impervious to desire and doom and hope,  
Their station of inviolable might  
Moveless upholds the world's enormous task,  
Its ignorance is by their knowledge lit,  
Its yearning lasts by their indifference.  
As the height draws the low ever to climb,  
As the breadths draw the small to adventure vast,  
Their aloofness drives man to surpass himself.  
Our passion heaves to wed the eternal calm,  
Our dwarf-search mind to meet the Omniscient's force.  
Acquiescing in the wisdom that made hell  
And the harsh utility of death and tears,  
Acquiescing in the gradual steps of Time,  
Careless they seem of the grief that stings the world's heart,  
Careless of the pain that rends its body and life;  
Above joy and sorrow is that grandeur's walk:  
They have no portion in the good that dies,  
Mute, pure, they share not in the evil done;  
Else might their strength be marred and could not save.  
Alive to the truth that dwells in God's extremes,  
Awake to a motion of all-seeing Force,  
The slow venture of the long ambiguous years  
And the unexpected good from woeful deeds,  
The immortal sees not as we vainly see.  
He looks on hidden aspects and screened powers,  
He knows the law and natural line of things.  
Undriven by a brief life's will to act,  
Unharassed by the spur of pity and fear,  
He makes no haste to untie the cosmic knot  
Or the world's torn jarring heart to reconcile.  
In Time he waits for the Eternal's hour.  
Yet a spiritual secret aid is there;  
While a tardy Evolution's coils wind on  
And Nature hews her way through adamant  
A divine intervention thrones above.  
Alive in a dead rotating universe  
We whirl not here upon a casual globe  
Abandoned to a task beyond our force:

Even through the tangled anarchy called Fate  
And through the bitterness of death and fall  
An outstretched Hand is felt upon our lives.  
It is near us in unnumbered bodies and births;  
In its unshaken grasp it keeps for us safe  
The one inevitable supreme result  
No will can take away and no doom change,  
The crown of conscious Immortality,  
The godhead promised to our struggling souls  
When first man's heart dared death and suffered life.  
One who has shaped this world is ever its lord:  
Our errors are his steps upon the way;  
He works through the fierce vicissitudes of our lives,  
He works through the hard breath of battle and toil,  
He works through our sins and sorrows and our tears,  
His knowledge overrules our nescience;  
Whatever the appearance we must bear,  
Whatever our strong ills and present fate,  
When nothing we can see but drift and bale,  
A mighty Guidance leads us still through all.  
After we have served this great divided world  
God's bliss and oneness are our inborn right.  
A date is fixed in the calendar of the Unknown,  
An anniversary of the Birth sublime:  
Our soul shall justify this chequered walk,  
All will come near that now is nought or far.  
These calm and distant Mights shall act at last.  
Immovably ready for their destined task,  
The ever-wise compassionate Brilliances  
Await the sound of the Incarnate's voice  
To leap and bridge the chasms of Ignorance  
And heal the hollow yearning gulfs of Life  
And fill the abyss that is the universe.  
Here meanwhile at the Spirit's opposite pole  
In the mystery of the deeps that God has built  
For his abode below the Thinker's sight,  
In this compromise of a stark absolute Truth  
With the Light that dwells near the dark end of things,  
In this tragi-comedy of divine disguise,  
This long far seeking for joy ever near,  
In the grandiose dream of which the world is made,  
In this gold dome on a black dragon base,

## THE ADVENT

The conscious Force that acts in Nature's breast,  
 A dark-robed labourer in the cosmic scheme  
 Carrying clay images of unborn gods,  
 Executrix of the inevitable Idea  
 Hampered, enveloped by the hoops of Fate,  
 Patient trustee of slow eternal Time,  
 Absolves from hour to hour her secret charge.  
 All she foresees in masked imperative depths;  
 The dumb intention of the unconscious gulfs  
 Answers to a will that sees upon the heights,  
 And the evolving Word's first syllable  
 Ponderous, brute-sensed, contains its luminous close;  
 Privy to a summit victory's vast descent  
 And the portent of the soul's immense uprise.

All here where each thing seems its lonely self  
 Are figures of the sole transcendent One:  
 Only by him they are, his breath is their life;  
 An unseen Presence moulds the oblivious clay.  
 A playmate in the mighty Mother's game,  
 One came upon the dubious whirling globe  
 To hide from her pursuit in force and form.  
 A secret spirit in the Inconscient's sleep,  
 A shapeless Energy, a voiceless Word,  
 He was here before the elements could emerge,  
 Before there was light of mind or life could breathe.  
 Accomplice of her cosmic huge pretence,  
 His semblances he turns to real shapes  
 And makes the symbol equal with the truth:  
 He gives to his timeless thoughts a form in Time.  
 He is the substance, he the self of things;  
 She has forged from him her works of skill and might:  
 She wraps him in the magic of her moods  
 And makes of his myriad truths her countless dreams.  
 The Master of being has come close to her,  
 An immortal child born in the fugitive years.  
 In objects wrought, in the persons she conceives,  
 Dreaming she chases her idea of him,  
 And catches here a look and there a gest:  
 Ever he repeats in them his ceaseless births.  
 He is the Maker and the world he made,  
 He is the vision and he is the Seer;

He is himself the actor and the act,  
He is himself the knower and the known,  
He is himself the dreamer and the dream.  
There are Two who are One and play in many worlds;  
In Knowledge and Ignorance they have spoken and met  
And light and darkness are their eyes' interchange.  
Our pleasure and pain are their wrestle and embrace,  
Our deeds, our hopes are intimate to their tale;  
They are married secretly in our thought and life.  
The universe is an endless masquerade:  
For nothing here is utterly what it seems,  
It is a dream-fact vision of a truth  
Which without the dream would not be wholly true.  
A significant phenomenon stands out;  
We accept its face and pass by all it means;  
A part is seen, we take it for the whole.  
Thus have they planned their play with us for roles;  
Author and actor with himself as scene,  
He moves there as the Soul, as Nature she.  
Here on the earth where we must fill our parts,  
She has concealed her glory and her bliss  
And disguised the Love and Wisdom in her heart.  
Of all the marvel and beauty that are hers  
Only a darkened little we can feel.  
He too wears a diminished Godhead here,  
He has forsaken his omnipotence,  
His calm he has foregone and infinity.  
He knows her only, he has forgotten himself;  
To her he abandons all to make her great.  
He hopes in her to find himself anew,  
Incarnate, wedding his infinity's peace  
To her creative passion's ecstasy.  
Although possessor of the earth and heavens,  
He leaves to her the cosmic management.  
An eager solicitor for her love and grace,  
A courtier in her numberless retinue,  
Content to be with her or to feel her near,  
He makes the most of the little that she yields,  
Her slightest signs of favour proudly wears.  
Happy, inert he lies beneath her feet:  
His breast he offers for her cosmic dance  
Of which our lives are the quivering theatre,

## THE ADVENT

And which none could bear but for his strength within,  
But none would leave because of his delight.  
Passive, he bears the impacts of the world,  
Active, he does whatever her will inspires;  
A witness and student of her joy and dole,  
A partner in her evil and her good,  
He has consented to her passionate ways,  
He is driven by her sweet and dreadful force.  
His sanctioning name initials all her works;  
His witness silence justifies her deeds;  
In her fancies of the moment and its mood,  
In the execution of her drama's scheme,  
In our lives she enacts through him things great and small,  
Things terrible and beautiful and divine.  
Her empire in the cosmos she has built  
And he is governed by her mighty laws.  
His being a field of her vast experiment,  
His consciousness a babe upon her knees,  
She binds to knowledge of the shapes of Time  
And the creative error of limiting mind  
And chance that wears the rigid face of fate  
And her sport of death and pain and Nescience  
His suppressed and struggling immortality.  
His soul is a subtle atom in a mass,  
His substance a material for her work.  
His spirit survives amid the death of things,  
He is carried by her from the Night to Light.  
This grand surrender is his free-will gift,  
His pure transcendent force submits to her.  
In the pattern she has set for him he moves,  
He thinks with her thoughts, with her trouble his bosom heaves;  
He seems the thing that she would have him seem  
Or is whatever her artist will can make.  
To reign she spurs him, her powers he must control:  
He studies her ways, if so he may prevail,  
He has harnessed her to the yoke of her own law;  
His face of human thought puts on a crown:  
To obey, she feigns to live only for his use,  
But when he conquers her then is he most her slave;  
He is her dependent and she rules him still.  
Only when he has remembered his true self,  
Her highest heights she unmasks and is his mate.

Till then he is a plaything of her moods,  
 A seeming regent, yet her willing toy:  
 Obedient to her masterful control,  
 Her subject waiting on her sovereign eyes,  
 He has sold himself into her regal power  
 For any blow or boon that she may choose.  
 Even in what is suffering to our sense,  
 He bears the sweetness of her mastering touch,  
 In all experience feels her blissful hands;  
 All that she does is marvellous in his sight;  
 He rejoices in her every thought and act  
 And gives consent to all that she can wish;  
 Whatever she desires he wills to be.  
 All-knowing he accepts our darkened state,  
 Divine, wears shapes of animal or man;  
 Eternal, he assents to Fate and Time,  
 Immortal, dallies with mortality.  
 The All-Conscious ventured into Ignorance,  
 The All-Blissful bore to be insensible.  
 Incarnate in a world of strife and pain,  
 He puts on joy and sorrow like a robe  
 And drinks experience like a strengthening wine.  
 He whose transcendence rules the pregnant Vasts,  
 Prescient now dwells in our subliminal depths,  
 A luminous individual Power, alone.

The Absolute, the Perfect, the Alone  
 Has called out of his silence his mute Force  
 Where she lay in the featureless and formless hush  
 Guarding from Time by her immobile sleep  
 The ineffable puissance of his solitude.  
 The Absolute, the Perfect, the Alone  
 Has entered with his silence into space:  
 He has fashioned countless persons from his self;  
 He lives in all, who lived in himself alone;  
 Space is himself and Time is only he.  
 The Absolute, the Perfect, the Immune,  
 One who is in us as our secret self,  
 Our mask of imperfection has assumed  
 And made this tenement of flesh his own,  
 His image in the human measure cast  
 That to his divine measure we might rise;

## THE ADVENT

Ourselves recasting he can then impose  
A plan of godhead on the mortal's mould.  
A mutual debt binds man to the Supreme:  
We must put on his nature as he put ours;  
We are sons of God and must be even as he:  
His human portion, we must grow divine.  
Our life is a paradox with God for key.  
But meanwhile all is a shadow cast by a dream  
And to the musing and immobile Spirit  
Life and himself don the aspect of a myth,  
The burden of a long unmeaning tale.  
For the key is hid and by the Inconscient kept;  
The secret God beneath the threshold dwells.  
In a body obscuring the immortal Spirit  
A nameless Resident with unknown powers,  
An omnipotent indiscernible Influence,  
He sits, unfelt by the form in which he lives  
And veils his knowledge by the groping mind.  
A wanderer in a world his thoughts have made,  
He turns in a chiaroscuro of error and truth  
To find a wisdom that on high is his.  
As one forgetting he searches for himself;  
As if he had lost an inner light he seeks:  
As a sojourner lingering amid alien scenes  
He journeys to a home he knows no more.  
His own self's truth he seeks who is the Truth;  
He is the Player who became the play,  
He is the Thinker who became the thought;  
He is the many who was the silent One.  
In the symbol figures of the cosmic Force  
And in her living and inanimate signs  
And in her complex tracery of events  
He explores the ceaseless miracle of himself,  
Till the thousandfold enigma has been solved  
In the single light of an all-witnessing Soul.  
This was his compact with his mighty mate,  
For love of her, for ever joined with her  
To follow the course of Time's eternity,  
Amid magic dramas of her sudden moods  
And the surprises of her masked Idea  
And the vicissitudes of her vast caprice.  
His goals are two and apart, which yet are one:

Of the great Mother's wide uncharted will  
And the rude enigma of her terrestrial ways  
He is the explorer and the mariner;  
On a secret inner ocean without bourne  
He is the adventurer and cosmologist  
Of a magic earth's obscure geography.  
In her material order's clear design,  
Even though the end is left for ever unsure,  
Though ever unstable is life's shifting flow,  
His paths are found for him; firm lands appear  
As stations in the ages' weltering flood,  
Then new horizons lure the mind's advance.  
There comes no close to the finite's boundlessness,  
There is no last certitude in which thought can pause  
And no terminus of the soul's experience.  
A farthest limit never wholly reached,  
An unattained perfection calls to him  
From distant boundaries in the unknown:  
A long beginning only has been made.  
An expert captain of a fragile craft,  
At first he hugs the shore and shuns the main,  
And in a petty coastal traffic plies,  
His pay doled out from port to neighbouring port,  
Content with a safe round ever the same.  
Then his world widens and wider grow his powers.  
On a commissioned keel his merchant hull  
Serving her commerce in the riches of Time  
Severs the foam of a great land-locked sea  
To reach unknown harbour lights in distant climes  
Or open markets of her opulent trade  
In jewelled toys brought for an infant's play  
And perishable products of hard toil  
And transient splendours won and lost by the days.  
Or passing through a gate of pillar-rocks  
He finds new havens in storm-troubled isles,  
Or, guided by a sure compass in his thought,  
He plunges through a bright haze that hides the stars,  
Steering on the trade routes of Ignorance.  
He chances on unimagined continents,  
Long coral reefs meets in an ocean waste.  
At last he hears a chanting on the heights  
And the far speaks and the unknown grows near:

## THE ADVENT

He crosses borders into unseen realms  
And a new vision of himself and things.  
He is a spirit in an unfinished world  
That knows him not and cannot know itself:  
The surface symbol of his goalless quest  
Takes deeper meanings to his inner view;  
His is a search of darkness for the light,  
Of mortal life for immortality.

In the vessel of an earthly embodiment  
Over the narrow rails of limiting sense  
He looks out on the magic waves of Time  
Where mind like a moon illumines the world's dark.  
There is limned ever retreating from the eyes,  
As if in a tenuous misty dream-light drawn,  
The outline of a dim mysterious shore.

A sailor on the Inconscient's fathomless sea,  
He voyages through a starry world of thought  
On Matter's deck to a spiritual sun.

Across the noise and multitudinous cry,  
Across the rapt unknowable silences  
Through a strange mid-world under supernal skies,  
Beyond earth's longitudes and latitudes,  
His goal is fixed outside all present maps.

But none learns whither through the unknown he sails  
Or what secret mission the great Mother gave.  
In the hidden strength of her omnipotent Will  
Driven by her breath across life's tossing deep,  
Through the thunder's roar and through the windless hush,

Through fog and mist where nothing more is seen,  
He carries her sealed orders in his breast.

Late will he know, opening the mystic script,  
Whether to a blank port of the Infinite  
He goes, or armed with her fiat, to discover  
His new mind and body in the city of God  
And enshrine the Immortal in his glory's house

And make the finite one with Infinity.

Across the salt waste of the endless years  
Her ocean winds impel his errant boat,  
The cosmic waters plashing as he goes,  
A rumour around him and danger and a call.  
Always he follows in her force's wake.

He sails through life and death and other life,

He travels on through waking and through sleep.  
A power is on him from her occult force  
That ties him to his own creation's fate,  
And never can the mighty traveller rest  
And never can the mystic voyage cease,  
Till the nescient dusk is lifted from man's soul  
And the morns of God have overtaken his night.  
As long as Nature lasts, he too is there;  
For this is sure that he and she are one.  
Even when he sleeps, he keeps her on his breast:  
Whoever leaves her, he will not depart  
To repose without her in the Unknowable.  
There is a truth to know, a work to do;  
Her play is real; a Mystery he fulfils:  
There is a plan in the Mother's deep world-whim,  
A purpose in her vast and random game.  
This ever she meant since the first dawn of life,  
This constant will she covered with her sport,  
To evoke a person in the impersonal Void,  
With the Truth-Light strike earth's massive roots of trance,  
Wake a dumb self in the inconscient depths  
And raise a lost power from its python sleep  
That the eyes of the Timeless might look out from Time  
And the world manifest the unveiled Divine.  
For this he left his white infinity  
And laid on the Spirit the burden of the flesh,  
That Godhead's seed might flower in mindless Space.

END OF CANTO FOUR

## THE MASTER OF THE WORK\*

THE Master and Mover of our works is the One, the Universal and Supreme, the Eternal and the Infinite. He is the transcendent unknown or unknowable Absolute, the unexpressed and unmanifested Ineffable above us; but He is also the Self of all beings, the Master of all worlds, transcending all worlds, the Light and the Guide, the All-Beautiful and All-Blissful, the Beloved and the Lover. He is the Cosmic Spirit and all this creative Energy around us; He is the Immanent within us. All that is is He, and He is the More than all that is, and we ourselves, though we know it not, are being of His being, force of His force, conscious with a consciousness derived from His; even our mortal existence is made out of His substance and there is an immortal within us that is a spark of the Light and Bliss that are for ever. No matter whether by knowledge, works, love or any other means, to become aware of this truth of our being, to realise it, to make it effective here or elsewhere is the object of all Yoga.



But the passage is long and the labour arduous before we can look upon Him with eyes that see true, and still longer and more arduous must be our endeavour if we would rebuild ourselves in His true image. The Master of the work does not reveal Himself at once to the seeker. Always it is his Power that acts behind the veil, but it is manifest only when we renounce the egoism of the worker, and its direct movement increases in proportion as that renunciation becomes more and more concrete. Only when our surrender to His divine Shakti is absolute, shall we have the right to live in His absolute presence. And only then can we see our work throw itself naturally, completely and simply into the mould of the Divine Will. There must, therefore, be stages and gradations in our approach to this perfection, as there are in the progress towards all other perfection on any plane of Nature. The vision of the full glory may come to us before, suddenly or slowly, once or often, but until the foundation is complete, it is a summary and concentrated, not a durable and all-enveloping experience, not a lasting presence. The amplitudes, the infinite contents of the Divine Revelation come afterwards and unroll gradually their power and their significance. Or, even, the steady vision can be there on the summits of our nature, but the perfect response of the lower members comes only by degrees. In all Yogas the first

\* The Synthesis of Yoga, Chapter XI (Revised Version)

requisites are faith and patience. The ardours of the heart and the violences of the eager will that seek to take the kingdom of heaven by storm can have miserable reactions if they disdain to support their vehemence on these humbler and quieter auxiliaries. And in the long and difficult integral Yoga there must be an integral faith and an unshakable patience.

It is difficult to acquire or to practise this faith and steadfastness on the rough and narrow path of Yoga because of the impatience of both heart and mind and the eager but faltering will of our rajasic nature. (The vital nature of man hungers always for the fruit of its labour and, if the fruit appears to be denied or long delayed, he loses faith in the ideal and in the guidance.) For, his mind judges always by the appearance of things, since that is the first ingrained habit of the intellectual reason in which he so inordinately trusts. Nothing is easier for us than to accuse God in our hearts when we suffer long or stumble in the darkness or to abjure the ideal that we have set before us. For we say, "I have trusted to the Highest and I am betrayed into suffering and sin and error." Or else, "I have staked my whole life on an idea which the stern facts of experience contradict and discourage. It would have been better to be as other men are who accept their limitations and walk on the firm ground of normal experience." In such moments—and they are sometimes frequent and long—all the higher experience is forgotten and the heart concentrates itself in its own bitterness. It is in these dark passages that it is possible to fall for good or to turn back from the divine labour.

If one has walked long and steadily in the path, the faith of the heart will remain under the fiercest adverse pressure; even if it is concealed or apparently overborne, it will take the first opportunity to re-emerge. For, something higher than either heart or intellect upholds it in spite of the worst stumbling and through the most prolonged failure. But even to the experienced sadhaka such falterings or overcloudings bring a retardation of his progress and they are exceedingly dangerous to the novice. It is therefore necessary from the beginning to understand and accept the arduous difficulty of the path and to feel the need of a faith which to the intellect may seem blind, but yet is wiser than our reasoning intelligence. For, this faith is a support from above; it is the brilliant shadow thrown by a secret light that exceeds the intellect and its data; it is the heart of a hidden knowledge that is not at the mercy of immediate appearances. Our faith, persevering, will be justified in its works and will be lifted and transfigured at last into the self-revelation of a divine knowledge. Always we must adhere to the injunction of the Gita, "Yoga must be continually applied with a heart free from despondent sinking." Always we must repeat to the doubting intellect the promise of the Master, "I will surely deliver thee

from all sin and evil; do not grieve." At the end, the flickerings of faith will cease; for we shall see His face and feel always the Divine Presence.



The Master of our works respects our nature even when He is transforming it; He works always through the nature and not by any arbitrary caprice. This imperfect nature of ours contains the materials of our perfection, but inchoate, distorted, misplaced, thrown together in disorder or a poor imperfect order. All this material has to be patiently perfected, purified, reorganised, new-moulded and transformed, not hacked and hewn and slain or mutilated, not obliterated by simple coercion and denial. This world and we who live in it are His creation and manifestation, and He deals with it and us in a way our narrow and ignorant mind cannot understand unless it falls silent and opens to a divine knowledge. In our errors is the substance of a truth which labours to reveal its meaning to our groping intelligence. (The human intellect cuts out the error and the truth with it and replaces it by another half-truth half-error; but the Divine Wisdom suffers our mistakes to continue until we are able to arrive at the truth hidden and protected under every false cover. Our sins are the misdirected steps of a seeking Power that aims, not at sin, but at perfection, at something that we might call a divine virtue. Often they are the veils of a quality that has to be transformed and delivered out of this ugly disguise: otherwise, in the perfect providence of things, they would not have been suffered to exist or to continue. The Master of our works is neither a blunderer nor an indifferent witness nor a dallier with the luxury of unneeded evils. He is wiser than our reason and wiser than our virtue.)

Our nature is not only mistaken in will and ignorant in knowledge but weak in power; but the Divine Force is there and will lead us if we trust in it and will use our deficiencies and our powers for the divine purpose. (If we fail, in our immediate aim, it is because He has intended the failure; often our failure or ill-result is the right road to a truer issue than an immediate and complete success would have put in our reach. If we suffer, it is because something in us has to be prepared for a rarer possibility of delight. If we stumble, it is to learn in the end the secret of a more perfect walking. Let us not be in too furious a haste to acquire even peace, purity and perfection. Peace must be ours, but not the peace of an empty or devastated nature or of slain or mutilated capacities incapable of unrest because we have made them incapable of intensity and fire and force. Purity must be our aim, but not the purity of a void or of a bleak and rigid coldness. Perfection is demanded of us, but not the perfection that can exist only by confining its scope within narrow limits or putting an arbitrary full

stop to the ever self-extending scroll of the Infinite. Our object is to change into the divine nature, but the divine nature is not a mental or moral but a spiritual condition, difficult to achieve, difficult even to conceive by our intelligence. The Master of our work and our Yoga knows the thing to be done, and we must allow Him to do it in us by His own means and His own manner.)

The movement of the Ignorance is egoistic at its core and nothing is more difficult for us than to get rid of egoism while yet we admit personality and adhere to action in the half-light and half-force of our unfinished nature. It is easier to starve the ego by renouncing the impulse to act or to kill it by cutting away from us all movement of personality. It is easier to exalt it into self-forgetfulness immersed in a trance of peace or an ecstasy of divine Love. But our more difficult problem is to liberate the true Person and attain to a divine manhood which shall be the pure vessel of a divine force and the perfect instrument of a divine action. Step after step has to be firmly taken; difficulty after difficulty has to be entirely experienced and entirely mastered. Only the Divine Wisdom and Power can do this for us and it will do it if we yield to it in an entire faith and follow and assent to its workings with a constant courage and patience.

The first step on this long path is to consecrate all our works as a sacrifice to the Divine in us and in the world; this is an attitude of the mind and heart, not too difficult to initiate, but very difficult to make absolutely sincere and all-pervasive. The second step is to renounce attachment to the fruit of our works; for, the only true, inevitable and utterly desirable fruit of sacrifice is—the one thing needful—the Divine Presence and the Divine Consciousness and Power in us, and if that is gained, all else will be added. This is a transformation of the egoistic will in our vital being, our desire-soul and desire-nature, and it is far more difficult than the other. The third step is to get rid of the central egoism and even the ego-sense of the worker. That is the most difficult transformation of all and cannot be perfectly done if the first two steps have not been taken; but these first steps too cannot be completed unless the third comes in to crown the movement and, by the extinction of egoism, eradicates the very origin of desire. Only when the small ego-sense is rooted out from the nature, can the seeker know his true person that stands above as a portion and power of the Divine, and renounce all motive-force other than the will of the Divine Shakti.



There are gradations in this last integralising movement; for it cannot be done at once or without long approaches that bring it progressively nearer and make it at last possible. The first attitude to be taken is to cease

to regard ourselves as the worker and firmly to realise that we are only one instrument of the cosmic Force. At first it is not the one Force but many cosmic forces that seem to move us; but these may be turned into feeders of the ego and this vision liberates the mind but not the rest of the nature. Even when we become aware of all as the working of one cosmic Force and of the Divine behind it, that too need not liberate. If the egoism of the worker disappears, the egoism of the instrument may replace it or else prolong it in a disguise. The life of the world has been full of instances of egoism of this kind and it can be more engrossing and enormous than any other; there is the same danger in Yoga. A man becomes a leader of men or eminent in a large or lesser circle and feels himself full of a power that he knows to be beyond his own ego-force; he may be aware of a Fate acting through him or a Will mysterious and unfathomable or a Light within of great brilliance. There are extraordinary results of his thoughts, his actions or his creative genius. He effects some tremendous destruction that clears the path for humanity or some great construction that becomes its momentary resting-place. He is a scourge or he is a bringer of light and healing, a creator of beauty or a messenger of knowledge. Or, if his work and its effects are on a lesser scale and have a limited field, still they are attended by the strong sense that he is an instrument and chosen for his mission or his labour. Men who have this destiny and these powers come easily to believe and declare themselves to be mere instruments in the hand of God or of Fate: but even in the declaration we can see that there can intrude or take refuge an intenser and more exaggerated egoism than ordinary men have the courage to assert or the strength to house within them. And often if men of this kind speak of God, it is to erect an image of Him which is really nothing but a huge shadow of themselves or their own nature, a sustaining Deific Essence of their own type of will and thought and quality and force. This magnified image of their ego is the Master whom they serve. This happens only too often in Yoga to strong but crude vital natures or minds too easily exalted when they allow ambition, pride or the desire of greatness to enter into their spiritual seeking and vitiate its purity of motive; a magnified ego stands between them and their true being and grasps for its own personal purpose the strength from a greater unseen Power, divine or undivine, acting through them of which they become vaguely or intensely aware. An intellectual perception or vital sense of a Force greater than ours and of ourselves as moved by it is not sufficient to liberate from the ego.

This perception, this sense of a greater Power in us or above and moving us, is not a hallucination or a megalomania. Those who thus feel and see have a larger sight than ordinary men and have advanced a step beyond the limited physical intelligence, but theirs is not the plenary vision or

the direct experience. For, because they are not clear in mind and aware in the soul, because their awakening is more in the vital parts than into the spiritual substance of Self, they cannot be the conscious instruments of the Divine or come face to face with the Master, but are used through their fallible and imperfect nature. The most they see of the Divinity is a Fate or a cosmic Force or else they give his name to a limited Godhead or, worse, to a titanic or demoniac Power that veils him. Even certain religious founders have erected the image of the God of a sect or a national God or a Power of terror and punishment or a Numen of sattvic love and mercy and virtue and seem not to have seen the One and Eternal. The Divine accepts the image they make of Him and does His work in them through that medium, but, since the one Force is felt and acts in their imperfect nature but more intensely than in others, the motive principle of egoism too can be more intense in them than in others. An exalted rajasic or sattvic ego still holds them and stands between them and the integral Truth. Even this is something, a beginning, although far from the true and perfect experience. A much worse thing may befall those who break something of the human bonds but have not purity and have not the knowledge, for they may become instruments, but not of the Divine; too often, using His name, they serve unconsciously his Masks and black Contraries, the Powers of Darkness.

Our nature must house the cosmic Force but not in its lower aspect or in its rajasic or sattvic movement; it must serve the universal Will, but in the light of a greater liberating knowledge. There must be no egoism of any kind in the attitude of the instrument, even when we are fully conscious of the greatness of the Force within us. Every man is knowingly or unknowingly the instrument of a universal Power and, apart from the inner Presence, there is no such essential difference between one action and another, one kind of instrumentation and another as would warrant the folly of an egoistic pride. The difference between knowledge and ignorance is a grace of the Spirit; the breath of divine Power blows where it lists and fills today one and tomorrow another with the word or the puissance. If the potter shapes one pot more perfectly than another, the merit lies not in the vessel but the maker. The attitude of our mind must not be "This is my strength" or "Behold God's power in me", but rather "A Divine Power works in this mind and body and it is the same that works in all men and in the animal, in the plant and in the metal, in conscious and living things and in things appearing to be inconscient and inanimate." This large view of the One working in all and of the whole world as the equal instrument of a divine action and gradual self-expression, if it becomes our entire experience, will help to eliminate all rajasic egoism out of us and even the sattvic ego-sense will begin to pass away from our nature.

## THE ADVENT

The elimination of this form of ego leads straight towards the true instrumental action which is the essence of a perfect Karmayoga. For while we cherish the instrumental ego, we may pretend to ourselves that we are conscious instruments of the Divine, but in reality we are trying to make of the Divine Shakti an instrument of our own desires or our egoistic purpose. And even if the ego is subjected but not eliminated, we may indeed be engines of the divine Work, but we shall be imperfect tools and deflect or impair the working by our mental errors, our vital distortions or the obstinate incapacities of our physical nature. If this ego disappears, then we can truly become, not only pure instruments consciously consenting to every turn of the divine Hand that moves us, but aware of our true nature, conscious portions of the one Eternal and Infinite put out in herself for her works by the supreme Shakti.

★ ★ ★

There is another greater step to be taken after the surrender of our instrumental ego to the Divine Shakti. It is not enough to know her as the one Cosmic Force that moves us and all creatures on the planes of mind, life and matter; for this is the lower Nature and, although the Divine Knowledge, Light, Power are there concealed and at work in the Ignorance and can break partly its veil and manifest something of their true character or descend from above and uplift these inferior workings, yet, even if we realise the One in a spiritualised mind, a spiritualised life-movement, a spiritualised body-consciousness, an imperfection remains in the dynamic parts. There is a stumbling response to the Supreme Power, a veil over the face of the Divine, a constant mixture of the Ignorance. It is only when we open to the Divine Shakti in the truth of her force that transcends this lower Prakriti that we can be perfect instruments of her power and knowledge.

Not only liberation but perfection must be the aim of the Karmayoga. The Divine works through our nature and according to our nature; if our nature is imperfect, the work also will be imperfect, mixed, inadequate. Even it may be marred by gross errors, falsehoods, moral weaknesses, diverting influences. The work of the Divine will be done in us even then, but according to our weakness, not according to the strength and purity of its source. If ours were not an integral Yoga, if we sought only the liberation of the self within us or the motionless existence of Purusha separated from Prakriti, this dynamic imperfection might not matter. Calm, untroubled, not depressed, not elated, refusing to accept the perfection or imperfection, fault or merit, sin or virtue as ours, perceiving that it is the modes of Nature working in the field of her modes that make this mixture,

we could withdraw into the silence of the spirit and, pure, untouched, witness only the workings of Prakriti. But in an integral realisation this can only be a step on the way, not our last resting-place. For we aim at the divine realisation not only in the immobility of the Spirit, but also in the movement of Nature. And this cannot be altogether until we can feel the presence and power of the Divine in every step, motion, figure of our activities, in every turn of our will, in every thought, feeling and impulse. No doubt, we can feel that in a sense even in the nature of the Ignorance, but it is the divine Power and Presence in a disguise, a diminution, an inferior figure.  
Ours is a greater demand, that our nature shall be a power of the Divine in the Truth of the Divine, in the Light, in the force of the eternal self-conscious Will, in the wideness of the sempiternal Knowledge.)

After the removal of the veil of ego, the removal of the veil of Nature and her inferior modes that govern our mind, life and body. As soon as the limits of the ego begin to fade, we see how that veil is constituted and detect the action of cosmic Nature in us, and in or behind cosmic Nature we sense the presence of the cosmic Self and the dynamisms of the world-pervading Ishwara. The Master of the instrument stands behind all this working, and even within the working there is His touch and the drive of a great guiding or disposing Influence. It is no longer ego or ego-force that we serve; we obey the World-Master and his evolutionary impulse. At each step we say in the language of the Sanskrit verse, "Even as I am appointed by Thee seated in my heart, so, O Lord, I act." But still this action may be of two very different kinds, one only illumined, the other transformed and uplifted into a greater supernature. For, we may keep on in the way of action upheld and followed by our nature when by her and her illusion of egoism we were "turned as if mounted on a machine," but now with a perfect understanding of it and its utilisation for his world purposes by the Master of works whom we feel behind it. This is indeed as far as even many great Yogis have reached on the levels of spiritualised mind; but it need not be so always, for there is a greater supramental possibility. It is possible to rise beyond spiritualised mind and to act spontaneously in the living presence of the original divine Truth-Force of the Supreme Mother. Our motion one with her motion and merged in it, our will one with her will, our energy absolved in her energy, we shall feel her working through us as the Divine manifest in a supreme Wisdom-Power, and we shall be aware of the transformed mind, life and body only as the channels of a supreme Light and Force beyond them, infallible in its steps because transcendent and total in its knowledge. Of this Light and Force we shall not only be the recipients, channels, instruments, but become a part of it in a supreme uplifted abiding experience.)

Already, before we reach this last perfection, we can have the union with

## THE ADVENT

224

the Divine in works in its extreme wideness, if not yet on its most luminous heights; for we perceive no longer merely Nature or the modes of Nature, but become conscious, in our physical movements, in our nervous and vital reactions, in our mental workings, of a Force greater than body, mind and life which takes hold of our limited instruments and drives all their motions. There is no longer the sense of ourselves moving, thinking or feeling but of that moving, feeling and thinking in us. This force that we feel is the universal Force of the Divine, which, veiled or unveiled, acting directly or permitting the use of its powers by beings in the cosmos, is the one Energy that alone exists and alone makes universal or individual action possible. For this force is the Divine Itself in the body of Its power; all is that power of act, power of thought and knowledge, power of mastery and enjoyment, power of love. Conscious always and in everything, in ourselves and in others, of the Master of Works possessing, inhabiting, enjoying through this Force that is Himself, becoming through it all existences and all happenings, we shall have arrived at the divine union through works and achieved by that fulfilment in works all that others have gained through absolute devotion or through pure knowledge. But there is still another step that calls us, an ascent out of this cosmic identity into the identity of the divine Transcendence. The Master of our works and our being is not merely a Godhead here within us, nor is he merely a cosmic Spirit or some kind of universal Power. The world and the Divine are not one and the same thing, as a certain kind of pantheistic thinking would like to believe. The world is an emanation; it depends upon something that manifests in it but is not limited by it: the Divine is not here alone; there is a Beyond, an eternal Transcendence. The individual being also in its spiritual part is not a formation in the cosmic existence—our ego, our mind, our life, our body are that; but the immutable spirit, the imperishable soul in us has come out of the Transcendence.

SRI AUROBINDO

## THE FUTURE POETRY\*

(Continued)

### NEW BIRTH OR DECADENCE

AT this point then we stand in the evolution of English poetry. Its course, we can see, is only one line of a common evolution. Poetry like everything else in man evolves. But poetry is a psychological phenomenon, the poetic impulse a highly charged force of expression of the mind and soul of man, and therefore in trying to follow out its line of evolution it is the development of the psychological motive and power, it is the kind of feeling, vision, mentality which is seeking in it for its word and idea and form of beauty and it is the power of the soul through which it finds expression or the level of mind from which it speaks which we must distinguish to get a right idea of the progress of poetry. All else is subsidiary, variations of rhythm, language, structure; they are the form, the vehicle, they derive subtly and get their character and meaning from the psychological power and the fundamental motive.

If poetry is a highly charged power of art, aesthetic expression of the soul of man, it must follow in its course of evolution the development of that soul. I put it that from this point of view the soul of man like the soul of Nature can be regarded as an unfolding of the spirit in the material world. He turns the first view on the outward physical world and on his own life of outward action. He can reach great heights in this kind of world, and in this type we have Homer. Arrived at a greater depth of living there is a greater heightening of the desire-soul in him which first forces itself on his introspection when he begins to go inward. Poetry too takes this turn, rises and deepens to a new kind of greatness; and at the summit in this kind we have Shakespeare.

This way of seeing and creating cannot permanently hold the greater activities of the mental being. He ceases to identify himself entirely with the passion, the emotion, the thought-suggestions of life, for he needs to know from a freer height what it is and what he is, to see with the calm eye of his reason, to probe, to analyse. He does this at first on large and comparatively bare lines for a strong and provisionally adequate view. Poetry following this movement takes on the lucid, restrained, intellectual and ideal classic form, of clear beauty and the vision of the satisfied intelligence; that is the greatness of the Greek and Latin poets. But afterwards the intelligence

\* A summary of Sri Aurobindo's *The Future Poetry* ("Arya" 1917-1920)

gets more complex and comprehensive, seeks to work in a global way, opens itself to all manner of possibilities of truth. This is the type of modern intellectualism.

The poetry which arises out of this new mentality is full of a teeming many-sided poetic ideation, makes many experiments and combinations, passes through many phases. The true classic form is then no longer possible; for, the new spirit is too crowded with subtle thought-matter, too brooding, sensitive, responsive to many things. No new Parthenon can be built. The romantic strain is a part of this wider intelligence, but the pure and genuine romanticism of the life-spirit which cares nothing for thought except in so far as it enriches its own being, is also no longer possible. It may try to get back to that, but it cannot remain long alive. That is the secret of the failure of modern romanticism in Germany and France. In England with the greater spontaneity of its poetic spirit the mistake never went so far as in these countries. The poetry of the time of Wordsworth and Shelley is sometimes called romantic poetry, but it was not so in its essence, but only in certain of its moods and motives. It lives really by its greater and more characteristic element, by its half-spiritual turn. Only in drama was there, owing to the prestige of Shakespeare, an attempt at pure romanticism, and therefore in this domain nothing great and living could be done, but only a record of failures. Realism is more native to this kind of intelligence, and it invades poetry too to a certain extent, but if it dominates, then poetry must decline and cease. The poetry of an age of many-sidedness can live only by its many-sidedness and by making everything, as it comes, a new material for the aesthetic creations of the observing, thinking, critical intelligence.

But then comes now the vital question in this cultural evolution—in what is this intellectualism to culminate. The intellect moves naturally between two limits, the abstractions or solving analysis of the reason and the domain of positive and practical reality; its greatest work has been achieved either in philosophy, critical thought or Science. The age of developed intellectualism in Greece killed poetry; philosophy occupied the field. In the more rich and complex modern mind this result could not so easily come and has not yet come. In this age due to a want of agreement between the own essential spirit of poetry and the spirit of the age a certain decline in the power, importance and effectiveness of poetry has been felt. Throughout the later nineteenth century one observes a constant apprehension of approaching aesthetic decadence, a tendency to be on the look-out for it and to find the signs of it in innovations and new turns in art and poetry, itself due to a sense of some difficulty, limitation and unease. At one time it was hardly predicted that poetry must necessarily decline and give place to science. On the opposite side it was sometimes

suggested that a poetic criticism of life, using the materials of science, which might fill the place of philosophy and religion that were supposed for a time to be dead or dying powers in human nature, might live on. But this itself meant a deviation from the true law of aesthetic creation and only a more protracted decadence.

Behind these uneasy suggestions lay the one fact that an age of reason dominated by the critical, scientific or philosophic intelligence is ordinarily unfavourable to great poetic creation. The pure intellect cannot create poetry. Poetry is an interpreter of truth, it deals not so much with things thought as with things seen, not with the authenticities of the analytical mind, but with the authenticities of the synthetic vision and the seeing spirit. And therefore when the general activity of thought runs predominantly onto the former kind, the works of the latter are apt to proceed under rather anaemic conditions.

But this incompatibility is not the last word of the matter. The truth which poetry expresses takes two forms, the truth of life and the truth of that which works in life, the truth of the inner spirit. Even the first, which is common and natural as an initial movement, does bring some light of intuitive things. But also poetry may go back into the truth of the inner spirit. That is the effort to which it seems to be turning now in its most characteristic, effective and beautiful manifestations, in Whitman, Carpenter, some of the recent French poets, Tagore, Yeats, A.E., Meredith and others. But it cannot fully develop unless the general mind of the age takes that turn. There are signs that this will indeed be the outcome of the new direction taken by the modern mind. The human intelligence seems on the verge of an attempt to rise through the intellect to an intuitive mentality. (This, however, does not mean any sacrifice of the gains of the past.) There are critics who regard this tendency as only another sign of decadence. But this is to suppose that poetry can only repeat what it has done in the past and that a clear, strong or brilliant dealing with the outer mind and world is its last word and the one condition of its healthy creativeness. There is much that is morbid, perverse or unsound in some recent poetry; but this comes from an artificial prolongation of the past or a temporary mixed straining. An age which brings in large and new vital and spiritual truths, opens vast untrod ranges to sight and imagination, is not likely to be an age of decadence and a poetry that voices these things is not likely to be a poetry of decadence.

The intuitive poetry of the future, supposing it to emerge successfully from its present incubation, will not be a mystic poetry recondite in expression or quite remote from the earthly life of man. (Mysticism in its unfavourable sense comes when we glimpse but do not intimately realise, when we have the revelation, but not the inspiration, the sight but not

the word; and remoteness comes when we cannot relate the spirit with life.) But the new age is not that of glimpses, but of a luminous totality. The aesthetic mind, whether it takes form in the word of the poet or in the word of the illumined thinker, the prophet or the seer, can be one of the main gateways. And since the age will aim at a harmonious totality of being, the whole field of existence will be open for its poetry's subject. It is not a close, even a high close and ending in this or any field that the future offers to us, but a new and higher evolution, a second and greater birth of all man's powers and his being and action and creation.

## THE IDEAL SPIRIT OF POETRY

The gods of life and still more the gods of mind are so incalculably self-creative that to attempt to presage the future turns or developments in any of their fields is always hazardous. We can see where we stand today, but we cannot tell where we shall stand a quarter of a century hence. All that one can do is to distinguish for oneself some possibilities that lie before the poetic mind of the race and to figure out what it can achieve if it chooses to follow out certain great openings which the genius of recent and contemporary poets has made free to us.

What would be the ideal spirit of poetry in an age of increasingly intuitive mind? For the possibility of such an age is that on which we have been dwelling. I have spoken in the beginning of the mantra as an inspired and revealed and visioned thinking, attended by a realisation, to use the ponderous but necessary modern word, of some inmost truth of God and self and man and Nature. And in the mind too of the fit outward hearer who listens to the word of the poet seer, these three must come together, if our word is a real mantra; the sight of the inmost truth must accompany the hearing, the possession of the inmost spirit of it by the mind and its coming home to the soul must accompany or follow immediately upon the rhythmic message of the Word and the mind's sight of the Truth. That may sound a rather mystic account of the matter, but substantially there could hardly be a more complete description of the birth and effect of the inspired and revealing word and it might be applied, though usually on a more lowered scale than was intended by the Vedic Rishis, to all the highest outbursts of a really great poetry.

This is a theory of *mantric* poetry, which is very different from any that we now hold, a sacred or hieratic *ars poetica* possible only in earlier ages of faith. And perhaps no thinking age has been so far removed from any such view of our life as the one through which we have now recently passed. And yet curiously enough, it is still to something very like the effort which

was the soul of the Vedic or at least the Vedantic mind that we almost appear to be on the point of turning back in the circle of our course. The new ideals of the race seem already to be affected by some first bright shadow of these things, and even though it be only a tinge, there is every sign that this tinge will deepen and grow.

But this new vision will not be as in the old times something hieratically remote, mystic, inward, shielded from the profane, but rather a sight which will endeavour to draw these godheads again to close and familiar intimacy with our earth. In the old days these things were mysteries, which men left to the few, to the initiates and by so leaving them lost sight of them in the end, but the turn of this new mind towards an open realisation may well lead to an age in which man as a race will try to live and create in a greater Truth than has yet governed our kind.

And if this takes place or even if there is some strong mental movement towards it, poetry may recover something of an old sacred prestige. There will be no doubt plenty of poetical writing which will follow the old lines, and it is as well that it should be so, but also there may now emerge too the poet who is also Rishi, master-singer of the Truth, hierophant and magician of a diviner truth and a more universal beauty. There has no doubt always been something of that in the greatest masters of poetry in the great ages, but to fulfil such a role has not often been the one fountain idea of their function.

But there must intervene a poetry which will lead man towards the new creation from the present faint beginnings. It will be aided by new views in philosophy, a changed and extended spirit in science and new revelations in other arts, in music, painting, architecture, sculpture, as well as high new ideals in life and new powers of a reviving but no longer limited or obscurantist religious mind. An intuitive revealing poetry of the kind which we have in view would voice a supreme harmony of five eternal powers, Truth, Beauty, Delight, Life and Spirit, which are indeed the five great ideal lamps or rather the five suns of poetry. And towards three of them the higher mind of the race is in many directions turning its thought and with a new kind of force of insistence. Much has been known and discovered of a kind which had not been found or had only been glimpsed before. Now we are moving back from the physical obsession to the consciousness that there is a soul and a greater self within us and the universe which finds expression here in the life and the body.

We have no longer any ascetic quarrel with our mother earth; a spirit which is all life because it is greater than all life, is rather the truth in which we shall most powerfully live. Poetry and art most of all are powers that can help to bring this truth home to the mind of man and this mediation between the truth of the spirit and the truth of life will be one of

## THE ADVENT

230

the chief functions of the poetry of the future.

The two other sister lamps of God, colour suns of the Ideal—Beauty and Delight—are also needed. Truth and Life have not their perfection unless they are suffused and filled with the completing power of delight and the fine power of beauty. For, the ancient Indian idea is absolutely true that delight, Ananda, is the inmost expression and creative nature of the free self, because it is the very essence of the original being of the Spirit. It is the significance and spiritual function of poetry to liberate man into pure delight and bring beauty into his life. Only there are grades and heights here as in everything else.

These powers can indeed be possessed in every scale, can break out into a strong flame of manifestation, whatever the frame of sight: whether it be Homer chanting of the heroes in a god-moved battle before Troy and of Odysseus wandering among the wonders of remote and magic isles with his heart always turned to his lost and far-off human earth, or Shakespeare riding on a surge of the manifold colour and music and passion of life, or Dante errant mid his terrible or beatific visions of Hell and Purgatory and Paradise, or Valmiki singing of the ideal man embodying God and egoistic giant Rakshasa embodying only fierce self-will approaching each other from their different centres of life and in their different law of being for the struggle desired by the gods, or some mystic Vamadeva or Vishwamitra voicing in strange vivid now-forgotten symbols the action of the gods and the glories of the Truth, the battle and the journey to the Light, the double riches and the sacrificial climbing of the soul to Immortality.

The poetry of the future, if it can keep the amplitudes of its breadth and the nearness of its touch, will be a poetry of a new largest vision of self and Nature and God and the things which is offering itself to man and of its possible realisation in a nobler and more divine manhood. It need not be at all something high and remote or beautifully and delicately intangible, or not that alone. It will take up and transform the secrets of the older poets and find new and undiscovered secrets, transfigure the old rhythms. This at least is its possible ideal endeavour, and then the attempt itself would be a rejuvenating elixir and put the poetic spirit once more in the shining front of the powers and guides of the ever-progressing soul of humanity.

SISIR KUMAR GHOSH

## “FREEWILL” IN SRI AUROBINDO’S VISION

SRI Aurobindo’s views on the crucial choice that must be made of the way of living, if we are really to be fulfilled and the calls of existence are truly to be answered, are clear to most of us: we sum them up as “the Integral Yoga.” But we are not equally familiar with his outlook on the power to choose. Wherever there is the activity of the will, there is the phenomenon of choosing—and yet there is no warrant in this for believing that the choice is freely made and not occasioned by subtle or unknown factors other than our will itself. How exactly does Sri Aurobindo stand with regard to the problem whether the human will is free?

A couple of points which he puts before us may appear, in isolation and at face-value, to deny man freewill altogether. First, genuine freedom of will as of consciousness and delight and being can only be in a divine state, for only the Divine is genuinely free; and so long as we are in the unregenerate condition, which is subject to ego and desire and the drive of Nature, of Prakriti, untransformed by the Luminous and the Eternal, we can never speak of authentic freewill. Second, once we postulate a divine Omniscience, Omnipotence and Omnipresence, we must conclude it to have originated and decreed whatever arises and acts in the universe which is its emanation. Is there then any room left in us for freewill as usually understood? If no genuine freewill can be except in the freedom of the Divine, can we be thought free even to choose that freedom or stay away from it? Again, if all things are originally decreed by the Divine, is not our feeling of being real doers a delusion given us for some purpose of the Divine’s world-play? This question is akin to the time-old one: if God, having all-knowledge, has foreseen everything, have we any power to deviate from His plan, and do we not have inevitably to carry out the details of it? Many Christian theologians have attempted to solve the dilemma: some have said that God’s knowledge is in eternity and eternity is different from time and such knowledge does not clash with free action within a different order of being; others have said, “God cannot be a true creator if He cannot create creators.” No proposition of this type is in itself satisfactory, though each may have a faint inkling of some truth which is ill-caught and ill-expressed by it. To drive a wedge between God’s all-knowledge in eternity and man’s actions in time is to indulge in a quibble: if by eternity is meant a status in which past and present and future are not a sequence but an all-at-once, an endless total Now, then every “now”

## THE ADVENT

232

of our ordinary life as well as of all existence is not something fixed by God from the past, but would it cease to be actuated by Him in the very present? God's hold from the past is avoided; yet unless eternity and His all-knowledge are rendered otiose and meaningless, His hold at every present moment remains complete. In the face of this complete hold, the proposition about God being no creator unless creators are created by Him is no more than a brilliant epigram if understood in a Christian context. Christianity conceives the human soul as a creature brought into existence by God at some point of time and existing with some resemblance to Him yet with no essential identity with Him. Such a soul cannot be a creator in any Godlike sense and must be entirely subject to God's endless total Now underlying and actuating all its "nows" or else to His foreknowledge in the past determining its career.

The primary *sine qua non* to be recognised for making any freewill valid is: God who originates and decrees everything must somehow be not different from our own souls. Without identity with God no freewill anywhere can be. This identity would be the truth behind the epigram about creators: only, that epigram does not openly put man's soul on a par with the Divine, does not conceive it as an eternal aspect of the Divine—an eternal aspect possible because the Divine would Himself be conceived as simultaneously single and multiple, unitary yet many-poised, essentially one but numerically not bound by oneness. Does Sri Aurobindo grant the identity? It is a cardinal characteristic of his vision, bound up with God's being One-in-Many. Unless God is at the same time multiple and single, the manifold world would have no basis in God. We should have to rest with a fundamental dualism or resort to an illusionist theory of the manifold world. Even an illusion, however, must have at least a subjective existence and it can exist, be it ever so subjectively, in nothing save God if He is the Sole Reality, and to understand such an existing is as much a hurdle as to understand God's being One-in-Many. Besides, our evolution, difficult and beset with evil and suffering, out of the Inconscient, demands that God should be such: "to explain it", says Sri Aurobindo, "there must be two elements, a conscious assent by the soul to this manifestation and a reason in the All-Wisdom that makes the play significant and intelligible." The reason in the All-Wisdom is not here our direct concern, though we may mention that it is the extreme attractiveness of the strenuous joy lying in self-concealing and self-finding, the joy which would be at the utmost when the self-concealing is the awful plunge into the sheer Inconscient and the self-finding is through the absolute opposite of the Divine. What is of pertinence to the issue at stake is the soul's conscious assent. Can the assent be an explanatory feature and a meaningful fact under any circumstance other than that the soul is free to will? And can the soul be free unless it

is not created at a certain point of time to be sent willy-nilly on a world-journey through imperfection but is a particular eternal aspect of the Divine, a mode of His manyness, so that the Divine's fiat and the soul's assent are automatically the same thing? Sri Aurobindo's vision, therefore, is not inimical to the primary *sine qua non* for freewill, and his pronouncement on the universe's utter dependence on God's decree is not deterministic when taken in combination with his full outlook.

But a second indispensable condition has to be satisfied for freewill's validity. It is obvious that we, as we are from day to day, cannot be described as souls that are eternal aspects of the Divine. We are too obscure and weak and perverted: we have a tremendously long way to go to realise ourselves as individualised divinities. Individualised divinities we may be in our secret recesses: our daily surface existence is pretty far from Godliness. Hence the important query: does our souls' assent from their God-poise to the strange cosmic play confer on what we do in even our ordinary moments a true freewill? All our actions are really of our souls carrying out the free decisions they have taken in their rôle of divine creators; but, on our surface, are we in any sense our own souls and do we share at least some of their freewill? No freewill can be in us if even as we are, if even in our state that is human and not ostensibly divine, we have no power, however small, to choose or not to choose. Freewill can have little relevance to us if our normal selves are wanting in some touch of identity with our souls that are essentially identical with God: to exercise any freewill our ordinary moments must be identical in some degree or other with God Himself! Does Sri Aurobindo take them to be thus identical? Let us glance at his scheme of our selfhood, our soulship. Above all manifestation and evolution is the Jivatman, our highest self or soul, the individualised divinity, a supreme transcendental form in the play of the One as the Many. Presiding over manifestation and evolution, the Jivatman projects a representative into the cosmic process: this representative is the Antaratman, our inmost or deepest self or soul with all the potentialities of the Divine in it, and it passes from birth to birth, making for evolutionary purposes a bright nucleus round which the duller tones of mind-stuff, vitality-stuff and matter-stuff are gathered, infusing its own sweetness and light into them stage by stage and developing them to serve as its transparent mediums. Through experience in birth after birth the nucleus too grows and will at last be able to offer to the Supreme, whence the Antaratman came, a full manifested personality—many-sided though single, individualised yet embracing all cosmos and partaking of all Transcendence beyond both individuality and cosmicity in time. But, while dealing with mind-stuff, vitality-stuff and matter-stuff, this true psyche here below makes a projection of itself into them, a projection which gets steeped in their tones. Now, all existence has a biune

reality—Purusha and Prakriti, conscious being and Nature. Wherever consciousness plays, this biune reality is present in one form or another, openly concordant or apparently divided. We have thus in the realm of evolutionary existence a mental being facing mental Nature, a vital being fronting vital Nature, a physical being opposite physical Nature: these beings are experienced according as our consciousness assumes a mental or vital or physical poise. And all of them are representatives of the true psychic Purusha. When the multi-possible Purusha of us with its centre in the psychic being stands fully back, uninvolved in Prakriti and lord of it, though not united altogether with the Jivatman above, we have a clear realisation of some measure of authentic freewill, because that uninvolved and masterful Purusha, centrally psychic, is in rapport with the totally free Jivatman. But even when the projection of the psyche into mind, vitality and matter acts as something involved in Prakriti and is the stumbling surface being of us, the self as ordinarily cognised, then also it carries a touch of freedom with it; for that involvement, that enslavement, is freely made and there remains with us the power to withhold sanction to the current play of Nature in our members and to bring about a turn towards the Perfect, the Divine, the Un-enslaved. Precisely on that power is based Sri Aurobindo's appeal to us to lead the life divine instead of the life human. If it is asked what becomes of Sri Aurobindo's assertion that only in a divine state there can be genuine freedom of will, the answer is: he evidently means by genuine freedom of will a quality of the full experience of our being not what we apparently are at present but a luminous superhuman entity that is cosmic while being individual, and transcendental while being cosmic. Such freedom we cannot experience when we are unregenerate. In our present state, obscure and weak and perverted, we are divorced from the light and strength and beauty that we are on our ultimate heights: we have not the absolute freedom of our own hidden Infinite, nor have we the puissance and prerogative of our own psychic depths; still, a dim vestige we do possess of what we have put behind and beyond us and part of the vestige is an ability to give to Prakriti's fluctuations of inertia, vehemence and harmony a Yes or a No and gradually effect a passage from our human imperfection to a supernal splendour. No freewill other than this bare ability is ours, but it is freewill none the less. And at least a faint glimmer of freewill has indeed to be there in our surface existence if we are meant to be conscious co-operators in the work of rising from humanity to superhumanity and bringing into all our constituents what Sri Aurobindo terms the Supermind, the archetypal truth of all that we are in the evolutionary process. The free assenting highest soul of us, the Jivatman, that has been creative of the world-play from its eternal poise in the Divine, cannot but keep of its vast freewill a pin-point in conscious co-operators,

in minds that discriminate and argue and weigh, in beings that have enough detachment from Nature to at least enable them to study and judge Nature. On that pin-point the whole of mental human life is fulcrummed for activity, and the conceding of it is implied in the Aurobindonian outlook which holds our intelligent will to be a ray, deformed though it may be, of the Gnosis, the Supermind.

Two *sine qua non*s we have tabulated and both we have discovered to be granted by Sri Aurobindo. But there is a third which emerges from one special question concerning the dynamics of the world-play. Has the world-play been decreed from the past by God and is it going on inexorably since that old decree of the Eternal or does eternity connote an all-at-once, an endless total Now? If every "now" of ours were what our souls as portions of the Divine had foreseen and forefixed from the past and there were no endless total Now, there might be an experience of freewill by us since we would not be bound by any past other than that in which had acted our own divine selves with whom we would be having a pin-point contact. But an endless total Now can alone explain in entirety the sense we have of freewill in the "nows" of our common life, the sense that nothing of the past, even if the past be of our highest selves, wholly binds us and that at every moment we are creative of our actions. Of course, creativity in full cannot be felt by us from our poor human standing-ground; nevertheless, a tiny bit of it we would intensely feel only when our own highest selves would be acting in an endless total Now and not merely from a deific past. The truth behind the idea that eternity and time are different orders and God's foreknowledge in the former need not clash with man's freewill in the latter seems to be just this that for an entire explanation of the real creative feeling which we have, however pin-pointish, eternity should carry time in an all-at-once constituting an endless total Now: what the idea took no account of are the two other indispensables of freewill. Sri Aurobindo does take account of them: does he also envisage the last indispensable? In *The Life Divine* he distinguishes three statuses in God's eternity: a timeless immobile status, supremely self-absorbed, without developments of consciousness in movement or happening—a status of simultaneous integrality of time, which is a stable whole-consciousness of the successive relations of all things manifested—a status of processive movement of consciousness and its successive working out of what has been seen in the stable vision. Statuses second and third, combined, would give us an endless total Now underlying and actuating all the "nows" of the time-movement—Omniscience, Omnipotence and Omnipresence acting everywhere and in everything and at every moment but exceeding limitation by the moments and, while it spreads out a past, present and future, embracing them also in one whole. This one whole is the deific Ever-Present, with a pin-point

## THE ADVENT

236

of which our poor human "now" coincides, acquiring thereby the fullest reality possible for its speck of freewill.

People might lift their hands in shock or protest, crying: "If all we do is, for Sri Aurobindo, traceable to the Divine's eternal fiat, the choice in an endless total Now of our highest selves, a faint spark of whom abides in the Tom, Dick and Harry that we are, what is there to make us choose good and reject evil? If we cannot have freewill of any kind unless the Divine be taken as somehow acting in us, would anything we freely do be bad or blamable?" The first answer is: there is a sense in which nothing is wrong, for spiritual realisation actually testifies that in a certain state of experience everything is perfect, Brahman is all and all is Brahman—but that sense is truly attained by an experience of the All-Brahman, not by a mere idea of Him, and so long as the experience is lacking we cannot speak, with living conviction or direct right, of everything being equally good. What is more, to have that very experience we have at each moment to stand away from egoistic desire which is the arch-vice, the subtle root of iniquity. To realise that all is Brahman we have to reject something as not Brahman! This paradox has to be accepted and it provides a hint that the cry of shock or protest is irrational. The irrationality resides in that the fact of Brahman being all and all being Brahman is considered not only without spiritual experience but also without another side of the divine reality. Brahman has projected in his infinity a negation of the essentially divine and an emergence of divine values from the Inconscient. According to this arrangement by Brahman there is a constant and persistent and ubiquitous fight between the Divine and the undivine, between good and evil. Of course by "good" we must not mean always what puritanism or prudery or pacifism or any rigid rule or code sets up for our guidance: we must mean some profound urge towards surpassing our ignorance, meanness, cruelty, incapacity, ugliness and becoming like Zoroaster, like Christ, like Buddha, like Sri Krishna or, best of all, like Sri Aurobindo. There is an incumbence on us to follow this urge, since the entire evolutionary process of the hidden and negated God holds it as its secret law and it is precisely because the attainment of the All-Brahman is also an evolutionary step, a finding of a certain side of divine reality which too was concealed, that paradoxically we have in even this attainment to follow that urge and choose good and reject evil. In man the mental being, the conscious self-evolver, the urge is an unavoidable open ingredient of his constitution and cannot help being insistent and deeply desirable. We may tend to justify the non-following of it by arguing from one half of God's truth: the vision of Pantheos. But when both halves are taken together and we do not overlook God from above calling to God from below to rise and evolve in the *milieu* of God that is all, then the urge to choose good and

reject evil is found to be a decree the soul in us has passed from the supra-mental identity-in-difference it enjoys within the multiple yet single Divine. Surely this decree is not the only one and even its overruling at times may be deemed after the event a valid soul-act subserving God's purpose, since in God's subtle play real good may come out of seeming evil; but before an act has happened and while alternatives are still felt as possible this decree is logically the most valid, the most to be regarded, in an evolutionary scheme of Upward no less than Onward. The overruling of it may, on a back-look, prove itself justified in God's complex economy, but the overruling can never be justifiable in the moment of action. If it can, the process of upward evolution by us would lose support altogether and could never be a plan of the supreme Creative Consciousness for our freewill to carry out.

K. D. SETHNA

### SRI AUROBINDO

FIFTEENTH of August this year was the seventy-fifth birthday of Sri Aurobindo who some forty years ago counted for so much in the national life of India. After his sudden departure from the political field of India in 1910, to the Indian people and to the world at large he has remained a mystery. The fact that an Ashram has grown around him at Pondicherry—the French Capital in South India, where he has been residing in 'retirement' after his withdrawal from political life—composed of persons of all nationalities who have been drawn to him for one reason or another and that, off and on, books written by him are published indicate that he has not been entirely inactive in his retirement, yet the exact nature and significance of the work that he has been doing for all these long years do not seem to have been understood even in its barest outlines; on the contrary any number of misconceptions are prevalent about him even in quarters where some appraisement of his work might be expected. There could hardly be any excuse, however, for such misconceptions, at least amongst the thoughtful and open-minded persons, now that a number of his books are available from which it is not difficult to form a fairly correct idea of the goal which, with whatever success, he has been pursuing single-mindedly for about last thirty-five years.

To the world Sri Aurobindo is known as a "Yogi". The word "Yogi" however is used to mean so many different things by different persons not only in the West but even in India—the traditional home of innumerable systems of Yoga—that it helps us very little in precisely understanding

## THE ADVENT

238

Sri Aurobindo's work. In the minds of most of the people the word "Yoga" is usually associated with such things as the performance of extremely difficult bodily contortions and various other forms of physical austerities with a view to acquiring supernormal physical and psychical powers and even with such things as a long beard and matted hair, loin-cloth and ash-smeared body. To say therefore that Sri Aurobindo is a "Yogi" and leave the matter at that would, as generally understood, only mean that during all these last thirty-five years of his retirement he has been trying to acquire for himself supernormal physical and psychical powers by practising difficult physical feats and austerities.

Even if this more popular notion about "Yoga" is left aside and a somewhat more accurate and enlightened view of it is admitted, will it help us to have a correct estimate of Sri Aurobindo and his work? The answer to this would be both "yes" and "no"; "yes" in so far as the essential aim which Sri Aurobindo is pursuing is the same which not only all genuine systems of Yoga in India but also all spiritual and mystical systems all over the world at all times have been pursuing, viz., the realisation and union with the Divine, the Supreme Reality, the Absolute, God or whatever other name one might choose to give to That which though unknown and unattainable to our normal humanity is yet not beyond the grasp of its supreme endeavour and unflinching faith; "no" because though the essential aim is the same, there are differences of fundamental importance in the predominant purpose and method of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and those of other traditional Yogas and mystical systems.

The primary aim of the old Yogic and mystical traditions was withdrawal and liberation from earthly existence which was taken to be inescapably subject to ignorance and sorrow; their spiritual endeavour was mainly confined to freeing the being from involvement into this earthly life subject to darkness and misery, and merging it in the eternal stillness and pure bliss of the unconditioned Spirit. No doubt this endeavour had a purifying and illumining effect on life and nature also but it was limited and partial; in fact any decisive effort towards a complete and integral transformation of life and nature was never undertaken because of the fundamental reason that it was not considered possible. Spiritual influence was able to achieve a considerably profounder purification and amelioration of life than moral and religious influence could achieve but it was found incapable of radically delivering life and nature from darkness and suffering, limitation and incapacity at their very roots. Because of this incapacity, a total transformation and divinisation of human life and nature was considered impossible and the spiritual endeavour of the past seekers was restricted chiefly to withdrawal from life into the pure existence of the Spirit.

The most significant contribution made by Sri Aurobindo to the past

spiritual traditions, which also marks a most unique and momentous departure from them even while admitting their fundamental realisations is that he not only considers a complete transformation and divine perfection of life and nature possible but also destined and inevitable. Withdrawal and liberation of being from involvement in the ignorance of nature into the free and immutable existence of self is only a first step towards that perfection and not a culmination. Securely stationed in the stillness of the pure and free self, the whole ignorant nature has to be step by step surrendered and opened to the transmuting influence of the spiritual Light and Power of the Higher Divine Nature that, descending from above, takes hold of the lower ignorant nature and gradually transforms all its energies into their divine equivalents. In principle this effort is not unique to Sri Aurobindo's Yoga; for, in one way or another, it is known to all those mystical systems which were not merely satisfied with the negative effort of escaping into the pure unconditioned self-existence of the Spirit but also made the positive effort of changing human nature by the operation of the dynamic power of the Spirit. But this positive effort, though it achieved great results, remained in the end partial and inconclusive because the range and degree of the spiritual force realised by the past seekers was not adequate to completely and decisively deliver life from ignorance and evil. Our experience of evil and ignorance however intense is superficial because the life we normally live is superficial; they have their strong roots and formidable foundations in the fathomless depths of our nature of which we are ordinarily unaware. Unless the spiritual force realised by us is competent to penetrate these depths and to dissipate completely the evil and the ignorance by dissolving their very roots and shattering their very foundations, there can be no decisive and lasting amelioration and divine reorientation of life, no secure base and field for the flowering of divine life on earth. The spiritual effort of the past was unable to carry out this momentous task, because it could not rise to that summit of the spiritual ascension where is found that range of divine power the descent of which in the earth-nature can alone bring to it complete deliverance from evil and ignorance and an integral perfection in divine life. It is because Sri Aurobindo has been able to rise to that height and contact that supreme range of divine power that he considers an integral transformation of life and nature possible. It is because he has been able to discover that new all-transmuting divine principle that he feels compelled to attempt complete divinisation of human life—an attempt which was so far considered impossible.

This new principle and range of divine power has been termed "Supermind" by Sri Aurobindo. Some of the Vedic mystics seem to have had an initial glimpse of this principle but they never considered it possible or at least never made any attempt to bring it down in the earth-nature

with a view to wholly divinise human life with its power. Sri Aurobindo alone has envisaged this possibility and has been making this attempt in his so-called seclusion. He has been making this attempt because he not only considers divinisation of human life possible but because to him it is the destined goal of the evolutionary progress to which the human race must some day arrive.

The aim which he has been pursuing all-absorbingly during the long period of seclusion is thus not the acquisition of supernormal physical or psychical powers for his own self; nor has he been concerned with his own spiritual liberation, nor has he been devoting his time to writing metaphysical treatises or poetry; his sole concern has been the spiritual evolution of the human race. To carry that evolution to its successful culmination by carrying it to and as a consequence bringing down the supramental principle of divine existence which alone can wholly transform life and making it a firmly fixed operative power in the earth-life so that the human race may be decisively delivered from its blind suffering and be wholly divinised is then the goal of Sri Aurobindo's secret endeavour, the meaning of the mystery in which people find him enveloped and the purpose of the retirement he has imposed on himself for such a long period. Surely he has not drawn away from human life into some self-fabricated illusory void; on the contrary, he has only withdrawn from the superficial field of life (which may only be a temporary condition of his work and not a permanent necessity) so as to devote all his time and energy to tackle the age-long difficulties of life at their very roots and to find the supreme remedy which will decisively free the earth existence from the persistent shadow of evil and suffering and bring to it lasting peace and happiness.)

KISHOR H. GANDHI

*Aspire for integral and absolute loving consecration by which will be established faithfulness and purity, the forerunners of transformation.*

\*  
*With simple sincerity offer your vital being to the Divine and the realisation will begin.*

\*  
*To an aspiration for the Divine Love supported by faithfulness and sincerity in the vital, the Divine Love will surely answer.*

\*  
*To keep Agni burning always in the psychic centre is an indispensable condition for the transformation.*

## REVIEWS

**War, Sadism and Peace.** By Edward Glover. Allen and Unwin. 9s. 6d.

DR. Glover's thesis is that the causes of war lie deep-rooted in individual human nature, and unless it is tackled there by a psychological approach, it will not matter "whether politicians build a new *Palais des Nations* every thirty years or whether they hang anti-war charms on rhododendron bushes." The increasing danger of a third war so soon after the second, in spite of the United Nations Organisation, will incline men to take the psychological approach seriously. Dr. Glover suggests the application of the teachings of psycho-analysis to the solution of the problem. The aggressive spirit which men acquire in their childhood is, according to psycho-analysis, the ultimate cause of national wars. Dr. Glover makes these fundamental points: the forces and phantasies of destruction to which frustration gives rise, the mixture of sex, aggression and guilt which emerge in sadism and masochism, the entanglement of the individual in the group, by means of which he can project his hate abroad, these are the forces which operate behind the scenes. No "rational" considerations can compete with them because "reason" is more often their tool than their master. Dr. Glover suggests that unless we spend as much time and trouble on research into infantile aggression and its control as we spend on, say, cancer research, we shall not come anywhere near the prevention of war or the establishment of enduring peace. But Dr. Glover himself is not very hopeful. In his view we are still in deepest ignorance about the real forces at work, and all we can do is to go on researching into a subject which very few people seem to take seriously. This confession of the superficial nature of the knowledge as yet arrived at by the methods of psycho-analysis is welcome, as many people seem to think that with the advent of this infant science all the mysteries of human nature have been solved. But it is not true that we are all still in deepest ignorance about human nature. The elementary truths which psycho-analysis is beginning to find most perfunctorily and imperfectly were mastered by the Indian Yogins thousands of years ago. The research which Dr. Glover suggests need not be made anew; what we have to do is to make ourselves acquainted with the Yogiic lore which has been left for us by the ancient sadhakas of India and proceed to apply them to our individual and social problems according to the needs of the modern age and the stage reached by humanity through its long evolution. Dr. Glover speaks of "deepest ignorance about the real forces at work." Indian Yogins probed deeply into human nature and found

three fundamental forces operating in it which they called the *gunas*, sattwa, rajas and tamas. The aggressive spirit which he considers the root cause of war really belongs to rajas; the characteristic of sattwa is knowledge, that of rajas is action, and of tamas is inertia or inactivity; all the play of human nature proceeds by an interplay of these three *gunas*. The Gita says, "Greed, seeking impulsions, initiative of actions, unrest, desire—all this mounts in us when rajas increases." Rajas gives us the lust for action, but also grief, pain, all kinds of suffering. "All the ignorant and passionate seeking of man belongs to the rajasic mode of Nature." Reason, says Dr. Glover, is more often their tool than their master. Reason really belongs to the sattwa guna, and it has no assured mastery over the other gunas of nature, rajas and tamas: it is this fundamental disequilibrium which is at the root of all the problems of human life and society. However wise and rational a man may be, he can never be sure that he will not be overpowered by passions generated by rajas. "Now sattwa leads," says the Lord in the Gita, "having overpowered rajas and tamas; and now rajas, having overpowered sattwa and tamas; and now tamas, having overpowered sattwa and rajas." It is this fundamental instability in human nature which modern psycho-analysis is dimly beginning to perceive. But it has not yet the secret of overcoming it; its service lies in stressing the problem, not in giving the solution. As to the United Nations Organisation and the hopes based on the horrors of the atom bomb, Dr. Glover expresses supreme contempt. The atom bomb, he says, even makes matters worse because even if we refrain from using it in the service of aggression, our masochism may be such that "man may satisfy his urges to bring disaster on others enduring it himself."

But what, then, is the remedy? The remedy does not lie in human nature itself as it will always remain at the mercy of the unstable play of the three gunas and no amount of analysis of the outer nature of man will enable us to discover the method of mastering it. Psycho-analysis recognises that the real forces which determine human conduct are not on the surface, they are behind and below the ordinary consciousness, but it has not yet found out any effective means of investigating these forces. Its chief method is to analyse dreams which more often than not give fanciful results, as dreams are too often complex dramatic constructions, meant to soothe our mind and give us rest during sleep. It is extremely difficult to find the elements of truth that are hidden in the stuff of which dreams are made, and as a scientific method of finding the truths of our nature, dreams are practically useless and often misleading. Dr. Glover himself has no faith in this method; and he has found no means by which the aggressive spirit in man can be eradicated; that is, in terms of Indian Psychology, he does not know how to control and discipline the rajaguna in man. He is satis-

fied with giving a practical suggestion that the aggressive spirit should be reduced as much as possible by removing frustration wherever we can and that we must bolster up the forces of love by re-establishing family solidarity, and the warmth of smaller communities. But did not human civilisation begin with these very institutions, the family and the small community? They have certainly helped man to develop his emotional being teaching him to love his fellow beings; but at the same time they have bolstered up the aggressive spirit by developing egoism, the ego of the family, the ego of the community, which makes one regard other families and other communities as rivals and opponents. Even in the family, the love that is generated is not of a very high order, it has always the ego as its basis, fed up by the instinct of possession and domination. As a matter of fact, what men call love is a rajasic and vital passion and cannot take men out of the clutches of this guna which is the source of the aggressive spirit. Rajas and passions can be controlled to a certain extent only by the enlightened will and intelligence, that is, by the development of the sattwa guna in man and that is how human civilisation has reached its present height; but it cannot go any further by itself. Reason can put some check on our passions but can never conquer them and is liable to become itself a tool of the passions. There is a higher secret in man beyond the gunas, beyond the sattwa and the buddhi, *yo buddheh paramastu sah*: that is the Purusha as distinguished from Prakriti, the Soul as distinguished from the body, life and mind and it is by finding that Soul in us, our true being, that we can have a complete mastery over our nature and transform it by freeing it from all base movements which constitute the imperfection of man. Indian Yoga teaches us how to dissociate ourselves from the workings of our body, life and mind and find the Soul which is a portion of the Divine in us and in which we are fundamentally one with all other human beings and other creatures. Thus it is only by Yoga that humanity can hope to get rid of war and establish on the earth a reign of permanent peace and harmony. (But for that humanity will have to go through a course of spiritual discipline and that is a matter of time. In the meantime the statesmen of the world must find out some external organisation which will maintain peace in the world and give freedom to all individuals as well as to all nations to grow into the purity and perfection of the spiritual divine nature.) As the United Nations Organisation offers the prospect of such a machinery, it deserves the support of all, and one should not regard it with supreme contempt as Dr. Glover has done in his otherwise thought-provoking book.

A. B.

## THE ADVENT

244

**India, A Synthesis of Cultures.** By Dr. Kewal Motwani. Published by Messrs. Thacker & Co., Bombay.

**India Today.** By Rajani Palme Dutt. Published by The People's Publishing House, Bombay.

These are two recent works on India, each exceedingly interesting in its own way. Both trace the Indian national movement up to its penultimate stage, set forth India's vital problems and indicate how to solve them. Both books purport to have been published during the current year, but judging from the contents, appear to have been finally written up in 1946. They contain no reference to the new constitution of 15th August, 1947 nor to the large-scale outbreaks of communal frenzy before and after that date. This is a pity, for the opinion of two such experts as our authors on the establishment of two almost hostile free dominions in India and their analysis of the disastrous events connected therewith would have been of great value and of immense interest. Dr. Motwani and Mr. Dutt are both writers of some distinction, both have had large cosmopolitan contacts and both are undoubtedly lovers of their country. Each has put in a tremendous amount of hard work in his book and spared no pains in presenting before the public an honest and well-considered study of India's vital problems. Yet there is a great difference between the two authors as far as their angle of vision, their individual outlook is concerned. Motwani is a teacher and lecturer by profession and temperament, and has examined Indian questions from the scholar's point of view. Dutt, on the other hand, has been a practical politician for a long number of years and has picked up his experience on the actual field of political struggle. His politics, moreover, is of a very positive and assertive kind, and he has not minced matters where the iniquities of the Imperialist and the Capitalist are in question. He looks upon these two as allies and fellow-conspirators, both equally antagonistic to Indian democratic aspiration. He says, 'the immediate next step before the people of India is the conquest of national independence by the ending of imperialist rule and the overthrowing of its feudal-reactionary supporters within the population—that is, the carrying through the fight for democracy'. In this fight India will have to secure the sympathy and cooperation of the British working class and the British democratic movements, if she wants to secure an easy and smooth passage to complete freedom. Not only this. India's fight being one in which 'the forces of the working class and of the peasantry are advancing, through struggle, . . . to a happier future', she will have the active sympathies and good-will of the working class and progressive forces all over the world. This is briefly Dutt's standpoint. It is quite a different proposition from the movement of Indian freedom as visualised by Dr. Motwani. While

therefore, Dutt's book is a long account of moves and counter-moves by the Imperialist-cum-Capitalist interest on the one hand and, on the other, by the various political parties in India, the various classes who have been waking up to political consciousness, Motwani's book is a working out of India's political destiny on the basis of her cultural heritage and her age-old ideals. We find ourselves more in sympathy with the latter's approach but realise that Dutt has written more directly and more trenchantly, and that his style generally is very much more terse and lucid than that of Motwani. In fact, the main fault of the latter's book is that it is loosely knit and somewhat too prolix in parts. Probably this is due largely to the fact that the book is a collection of lectures delivered at different times, to different people. The fault however is there and we cannot but mention it. Motwani is no doubt an idealist, but his idealism does not go far enough. A man who believes in India's soul struggling for expression and for the fulfilment of her sacred God-appointed mission in the world must, to use a common phrase, go the whole hog. He must accept the supreme truth that in the individual, as much as in the group, the Divine is fulfilling Himself, and that human life is an ever-progressive effort to manifest God on earth. Failure to accept this basic truth would seem to render all talk of India's spiritual destiny well-nigh meaningless. Our standpoint will be much clearer when we set forth what Sri Aurobindo has in his divine vision seen of the past, present and future of India's history. Yet, to do Dr. Motwani justice it must be admitted that he has visualised an integration of cultures in India,—'the gathering up of the many into the one, into every phase of the life of the individual, the group and the nation'. Though this falls short of Sri Aurobindo's clear dictum, "God always keeps for Himself a chosen country in which the higher knowledge is through all chances and dangers, by the few or the many, continually preserved, and for the present, in this Chaturyuga at least, that country is India", yet is this view a great deal ahead of the outlook of Mr. R. P. Dutt, who is not handicapped by any faith in a spiritual force guiding the destiny of nations. Not that he is not a believer in India's great past, not that he has no faith in India's glorious future. It is only this, that he does not give the Spirit a place in his political horizon. The following few lines quoted from his book indicate his outlook. "The people of India have already played a great part in world-history, not as conquerors but in the sphere of culture, thought, art and industry. The national and social liberation of the Indian people will bring great new wealth to humanity."

In fact, in the course of several chapters dealing with the resurgence of India, Dutt does not think it necessary to refer to two such dominating figures as Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. This is tantamount to suggesting that the spiritual world where these two great souls lived and worked is

a thing apart from the birth of a free nation in India. There are two very brief references in the book to Sri Aurobindo, or rather to Mr. Aurobindo Ghose. Once, as a minor provincial leader in the neo-national movement of 1906-07, and another, as one of 'the leaders of the militant national movement' who 'sought to build on a basis of Hindu religion for their agitation and to identify the national awakening with a revival of Hinduism. By this act they cut off the Moslem masses from the national movement.' Even from the purely political standpoint this remark is futile in view of the tremendous success of the Congress-Khilafat movement, fifteen years later. Mr. Dutt belongs to that school of politics which lays great stress on class consciousness and class privileges, and is not averse to starting a class struggle in order to attain class ends. India must steer clear of such cross-currents. They are entirely foreign to her inherited political ideals. Though a democratic constitution was not altogether unknown in ancient India, still the typical state was a monarchy—not an absolute monarchy where the king does exactly as he likes regardless of any other considerations, but one in which the king ruled according to the eternal Dharma, that is to say, where he was really the symbol of the group-soul of his subjects and not a separate personality. Such a monarch was Rama who at the bidding of Dharma cut off the head of the ascetic Shudraka, and in deference to the wishes of his people banished his beloved queen,—both acts entirely against his own will. Between the king and his subjects in old India there was a subtle bond which manifested itself in, what may be called, a loving partnership in the administration of the state. This showed itself in the practical autonomy of the Panchayat in the villages and the various trade-guilds in the cities. These local bodies took so comprehensive and important a part in governing themselves, that it has been truly said that the ancient Hindu king was, more or less, only the War and Foreign Minister of the State. Dr. Motwani has described at length the village Panchayat, an institution that has endured through so many storms and upheavals right down to the present century. We have ourselves often worked with Panchayats in matters affecting the general welfare of villages and have realised what a fine spirit of loyalty and cooperation this institution had built up through the centuries. Of course, its success depended largely on that wonderful social organisation, the caste system. Generally speaking, the division of the community into so many castes, instead of obstructing, greatly facilitated the smooth working of the common life in the village. In some parts of the Konkan we came across a caste known as Teli, whose profession it was to grind oil. But strangely enough these Telis were not Hindus at all; they were Jews who some time in the remote past had settled down in these Hindu villages and acquired a status in the framework of village life. All these various castes, Hindus as well as non-Hindus, worked

faithfully for the community as a whole. Obviously, then, the old ideal was a happy contented life based on mutual brotherly feeling and on the loyal service rendered by each group to the whole. Mr. Dutt's political and social ideals are entirely different and are not, if accepted, likely to do any good to India even at the present time. It cannot however be denied that certain groups in this country have been stirred by the spirit of class antagonism and class struggle in the West. If so, it is because the ancient culture of the land, its conception of Dharma, is losing its hold on the people. This is what Motwani lays great stress on. He fears that the core of India's culture is in the course of disintegration and that the general aspect of Indian life has become disordered and chaotic. He does not however think that the disease is incurable, and like a zealous physician proceeds to prescribe his remedy. In this connection we quote a few very well-written lines from Dutt's book: "every stage of civilisation and culture . . . from the most primitive to the most advanced, exists in India. The widest range of social, economic, political and cultural problems thus find their sharpest expression in Indian conditions. The problems of the relation and co-existence of differing races and religions; the battle against old superstitions and decaying social forms and traditions; the fight for education; the fight for liberation of women; the question of the reorganisation of agriculture and of the development of industry, and of the relationship of town and country; the issues of class conflict in the most manifold and acute forms; the problems of nationalism and socialism; all these varied issues of the modern world press forward with special sharpness and urgency in India." The description is most interesting and true but does it show that India is drifting about helplessly on the waters of life entirely at the mercy of the wind and the tide? On the contrary, it shows that a renascent India has set about tackling the many problems of her life today. If she has girded up her loins to eradicate superstitions and decadent customs, to free her women-folk, to reorganise her agriculture and industry, she is obviously on the move, and Dr. Motwani's gloomy thesis that there is no force of renascence at work in India cannot be sustained. The galaxy of great men that have been born in India and have worked for her uplift in various directions during the last century and a half shows that India, ever statically great, has assumed a definite dynamic role. How else could she have achieved even a qualified freedom? It has not dropped from the clouds. No, India worked for it, history records, steadily and tenaciously, decade after decade, till Britain could no longer withhold autonomy from her. But unfortunately with autonomy has come partition. When in the days of yore the Gods and the Titans churned the ocean of existence, there arose out of the waters not only ambrosia but also a deadly poison. The freedom we have gained today is our ambrosia, our poison is the heavy

price we have had to pay for it.

Intellectually we may well ask the question: why should the people inhabiting this three-cornered country south of the Himalayas become one nation? The answer is clear: because they have been so in their inner self for a long long time. The pious Hindu, when he sits down for his daily worship, calls upon the seven mighty rivers of India to be present in the holy water in front of him. "Om Ganga, Yamuna, Godavari, Saraswati, Narmada, Sindhu, Kaveri, be present in this water", such is the invocation he utters. What is this but a daily remembrance of his Mother-land, the land of the seven Sindhus? The holy temples of India—from Kedarnath in the snows to Rameswaram on the Indian ocean, from Dwarka in Gujarat to Kamakshya in Assam—scattered about all over India betoken the same inherent idea of the unity of his country in the mind of the Hindu.

Sri Aurobindo says in this connection, "The whole past of India for the last two thousand years and more has been the attempt, unavailing in spite of many approximations to success, to overcome the centrifugal tendency of an extraordinary number and variety of disparate elements, the family, the commune, the clan, the caste, the small regional state or people, the large linguistic unit, the religious community, the nation within the nation. We may perhaps say that here Nature tried an experiment of unparalleled complexity and potential richness accumulating all possible difficulties in order to arrive at the most opulent result."

For a long time Nature persisted in this attempt, and when at last the problem proved insoluble she sought the expedient of foreign domination. That foreign domination, humiliating while it lasted and disastrous in its after-effects, we have now cast out and India is free again to exert herself and set her house in order. A new era has begun, an era of immense significance not only for India but for all Asia, nay, for the whole world, as both our authors have perceived.

So far India has achieved but a fissured and broken freedom, said the Master in his message of August 15, 1947. By way of remedy he suggested that we should ignore the division made along communal lines and refuse to "accept the settled fact as for ever settled or as anything more than a temporary expedient". If we do this and remember constantly in our thought the undying soul of the nation, the eternal spirit of India that none can mutilate, we shall soon see the end of these dire days of tribulation we are still passing through. Let us bear in mind Sri Aurobindo's solemn assurance, "When He wants to rise up from the mud and Narayana in man to become once again mighty and wise and blissful, then He once more pours out the Knowledge on India and raises her up so that she may give this Knowledge with its necessary consequences of might, wisdom and bliss to the whole world... when the movement of Knowledge again

expands and the soul of India exrands with it they (Yogins in India) come forth once more and work in the world and for the world." Heartened by these noble words, let us prepare to realise our great old ideal of a spiritualised society, of a kingdom of heaven on earth. There are three essential truths of existence which we must grasp before we can realise this sublime ideal. "God, Freedom and Unity", says the Master, "three things which are one, for you cannot realise freedom and unity unless you realise God, you cannot possess freedom and unity unless you possess God." We have then to be able to see God and to possess Him before we can arrive at real unity and true freedom. In order to be able to possess God the very first thing we have got to do is to abandon our ego-pivot and cease our ego-hunt. In any effective all-round planning for the future, such as Dr. Motwani insists on, this should take the foremost place, for India must attain spirituality herself before she can fulfill her God-given mission in the world. We do not wish to belittle planning in more material directions. Man, in India as elsewhere, must have food and clothing, he must have a healthy body and a sound trained mind, but all these things are but a means to an end and that end is always life in the Spirit. Let there be no mistake; we certainly do not mean that man has to abandon earthly life and escape into a sterile asceticism. What we do mean is that man has to realise God in everything and everywhere, and that all his action in this world has to become divine action and acquire a divine meaning. Nothing is to be abandoned, everything is to be divinised. We strongly recommend this view of the integral Yogi to Dr. Motwani who already believes in a spiritual mission for India. To Mr. Dutt, who is committed to a narrower view of things we have nothing to offer beyond the respect that is always due to an honest man. In an India already torn asunder by centrifugal forces, we cannot entertain another principle of division based on class interest. Let us concentrate on realising the triune truth of God, Freedom and Unity —God first, for, without Him Freedom and Unity are meaningless.

C. C. DUTT

Published by P. Counouma  
Printed at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry

*To be had of:*  
SRI AUROBINDO LIBRARY, 369 Esplanade, Madras

# New Publications (in English)

By Sri Aurobindo

Rs. as.

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO—A valuable collection of unpublished letters to disciples in reply to queries. 6 8

SAVITRI : A LEGEND AND A SYMBOL

Book I, Canto IV 1 0

Book II, Cantos I-VI 3 0

P. B. Saint-Hilaire and G. Monod-Herzen

THE MESSAGE OF SRI AUROBINDO AND HIS ASHRAM  
WITH 18 PLATES

2 8

Nolini Kanta Gupta

TOWARDS A NEW SOCIETY (Essays)

1 12

K. D. Sethna

THE POETIC GENIUS OF SRI AUROBINDO  
EVOLVING INDIA (Essays)

4 4

T. V. Kapali Sastri

LIGHTS ON THE VEDA

1 4

LIGHTS ON THE UPANISHADS

2 0

Anilbaran Roy

THE WORLD CRISIS (Sri Aurobindo's Vision of the Future)

1 12

Nirodbaran

SUN-BLOSSOMS (Poems)

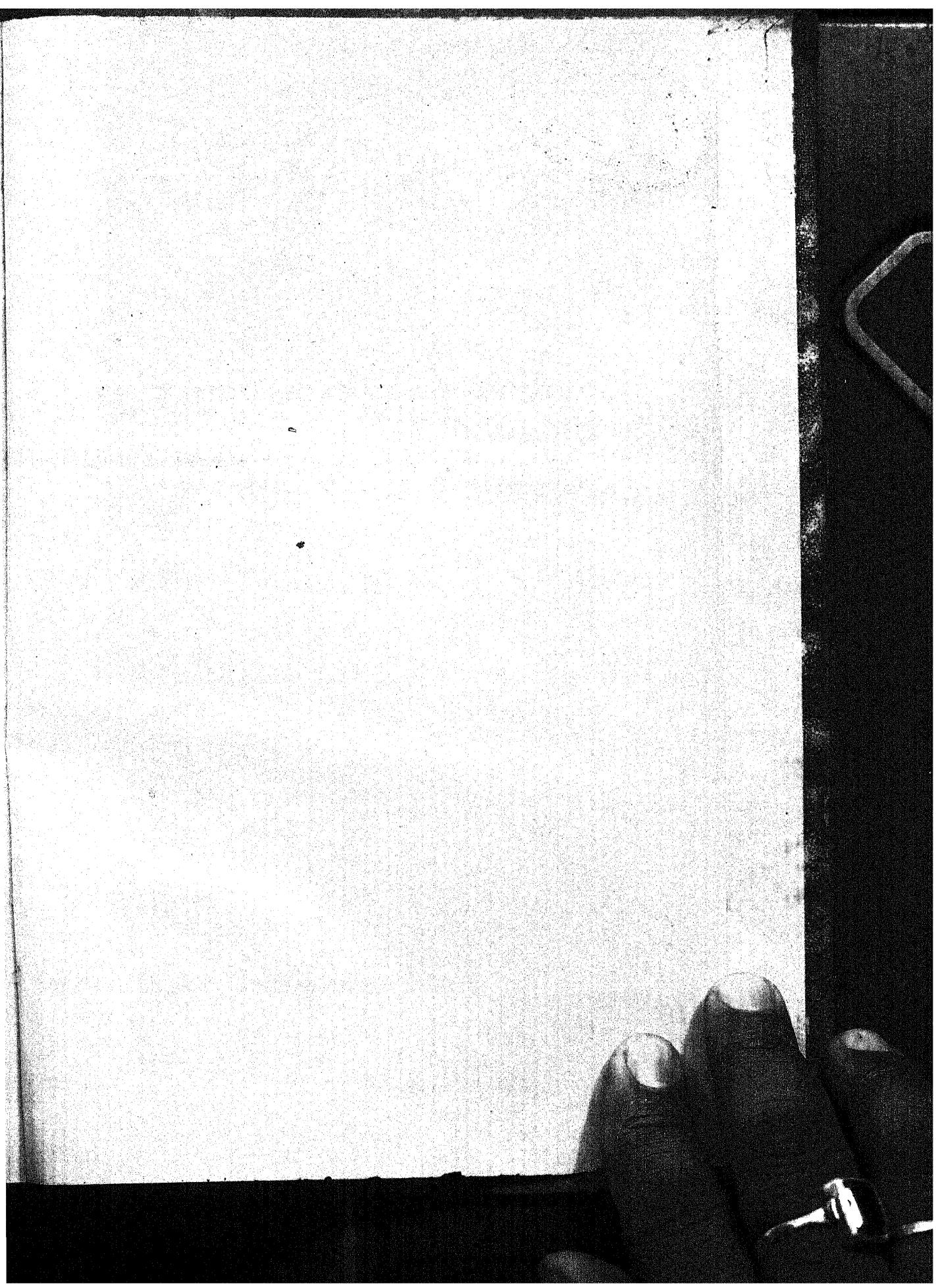
4 8

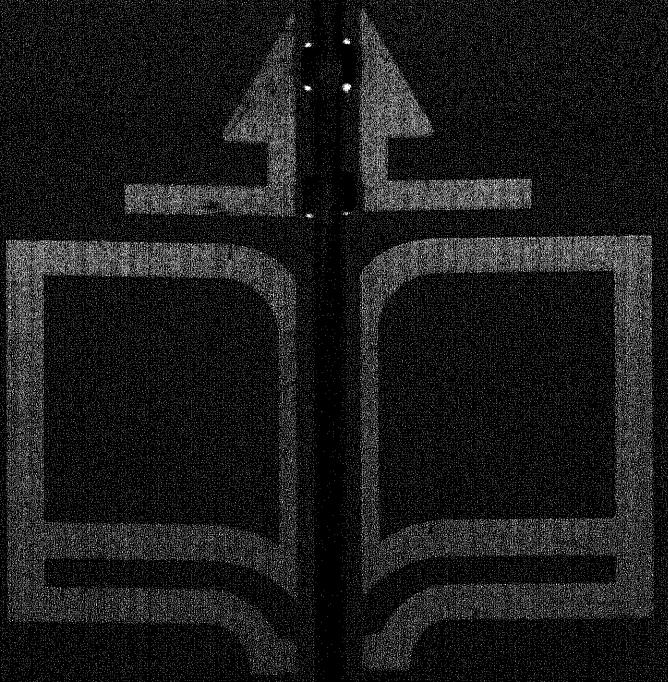
## Journals

1. SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL, JAYANTI No. 6 (English) 5 0
2. SRI AUROBINDO CIRCLE, BOMBAY—THIRD ANNUAL (English) 5 8
3. ADITI (Hindi Quarterly) 1 4
4. ARCHANA (Hindi Annual) 4 0
5. DAKSHINA (Gujarati Quarterly) 1 8
6. BARTIKA (Bengali Quarterly) 1 0
7. SRI ARAVINDA DARSHAN (Marathi Annual) 2 0

Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry

Sri Aurobindo Library, G. T., Madras





A5

B5



# THE BIBLE IN SCHOOL

## A QUESTION OF ETHICS

BY

J. ALLANSON PICTON, M.A.

(*Late M.P. for Leicester, and formerly Member of the first School Board  
for London*)

[ISSUED BY THE RATIONALIST PRESS ASSOCIATION, LIMITED]

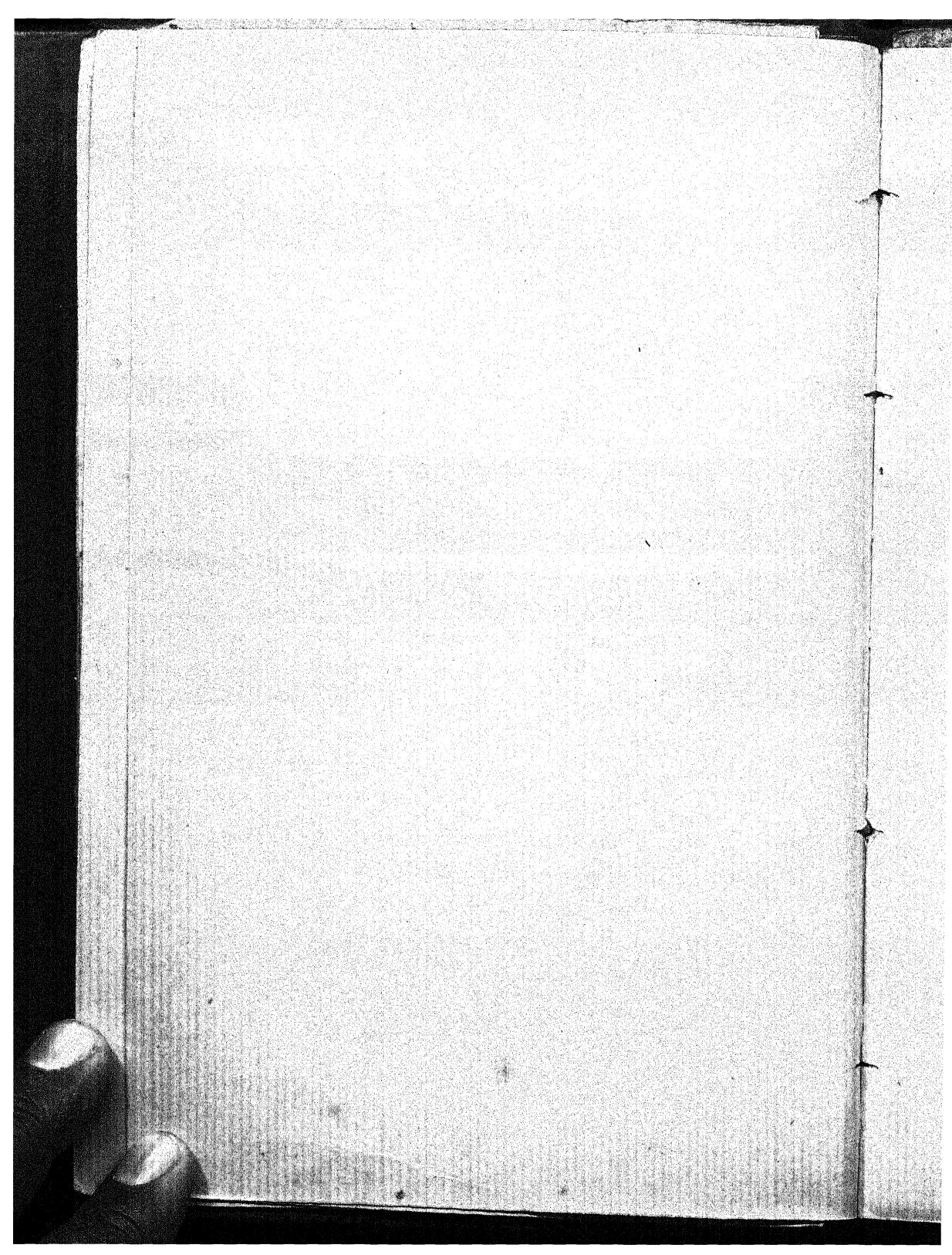
WATTS & CO.,  
17, JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET STREET, LONDON, E.C.



## CONTENTS

---

	PAGE
THE BIBLE SPHINX . . . . .	7
RELIGIOUS EQUALITY . . . . .	18
THE NEW CHURCH RATE . . . . .	27
NEW RELIGIOUS DISABILITIES . . . . .	38
MORAL EFFECT ON TEACHERS . . . . .	53
THE EFFECT ON SCHOOL CHILDREN . . . . .	63
THE WRONG TO THE NATION . . . . .	79
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION . . . . .	90



## PREFACE

---

THIRTY years ago, in 1871, when the first School Board for London accepted, with a close approach to unanimity, the well-known resolution proposed by the late Right Hon. W. H. Smith, M.P., in favour of Bible teaching in the schools, there was a small minority of three who recorded their votes against it. Not one of these three was insensible of the value and importance of the Bible in the education of humanity. On the contrary, they had a reverence for it which was certainly not shared by some of those who voted for the motion. Indeed, two of them had devoted their whole energies up to that date to the work of religious instruction. The first of the three was the Rev. Benjamin Waugh, whose name is now known and honoured throughout the world for the salvation he has brought to tens of thousands of suffering children. The second was the late Mr. Chatfeild Clarke, a sincerely religious Unitarian. The third was the writer of the following pages.

Few, if any, would like to confess that they have passed through thirty years of experience without changing an opinion; and I hope I have changed many opinions for the better. But all that I have observed in the course of many imperfect labours in the field of education has only confirmed the conviction expressed by that vote; the conviction that we should have better served the interests of religion as well as of education if we had acted on the judgment of the older Nonconformists, that the Bible is not a proper subject for State patronage and control. In so doing we should only have followed the example set us by those States of Greater Britain whose eyes discern the future more surely than ours.

J. A. P.

*October, 1901*

## I.

### THE BIBLE SPHINX

THE problem of the right use of the Bible in the nation's schools is a question of morality quite as much as of religion. Yes, say the advocates of its indiscriminate use, it is a question of morality, because you can have no morality without religion, and no religion without the Bible. Without stopping now to argue either of the points thus raised, I may remind the holders of such opinions that some noteworthy men of their persuasion have made these very points a reason for objecting to the indiscriminate use of the Bible in the schools; and by the phrase "indiscriminate use" I mean placing it in the hands of every teacher, whether Catholic, Evangelical, or Rationalist, to give to the children of believers and unbelievers alike explanations and instruction therefrom in the principles of the Christian religion and of morality.<sup>1</sup> The late Edward Miall represented many thousands of Non-conformists, besides himself, when he held out for long against national elementary education on the ground that it would be impossible to exclude the Bible, and that the Bible could not be properly taught by unspiritual, still less by unsympathetic or unbelieving,

<sup>1</sup> Article 200 of the Code of Regulations of the School Board for London. The words are part of the famous resolution carried by the late Mr. W. H. Smith. But the epithet, "the Christian," is a later insertion.

persons. Precisely because in their view no morality was possible without religion, and religion meant to them the Bible as a divine revelation, they insisted that the Book was too sacred a thing for indiscriminate use in the sense defined above; and, therefore, they dreaded the merging of their voluntary schools in a State system.

Later, when it was becoming clear that a comprehensive national scheme was inevitable, some of the most earnestly religious among the Nonconformists—such as the Rev. Edward Baynes and the late Dr. Samuel Davidson—thought the difficulty might be evaded by confining State or municipal schools to “secular” subjects, and leaving to the churches the responsibility for supplementing by religious instruction this confessedly imperfect training.

I do not know that I can give a better illustration of the views then held by many of the most devout Nonconformists than a quotation from a speech delivered in 1850 by my father, the late Sir James A. Picton, who was born and brought up amongst the Wesleyans, and was thoroughly evangelical in his belief. At a meeting summoned by several influential men in Liverpool, to petition Parliament in favour of secular education, he moved the following resolution: “That, in order that the rights of conscience may be effectually secured, it should be a fundamental rule that nothing should be taught in any of the schools which favours the peculiar tenets of any religious sect or denomination.” But the speaker did not see in these words any suggestion of the future “compromise.” He believed that, to avoid tenets peculiar to a part only of the nation, it would be necessary to confine instruction to secular subjects. At the outset

he referred to an article reprinted from the Nonconformist newspaper which then opposed any rate-aided education. He said :—

"The article is headed 'Wanted a Foundation'—a very appropriate heading doubtless; for arguments more baseless, and objections of a more flimsy character, it has not often been my lot to peruse. The gist of the argument is this: that because there are some things in which it would be wrong for the community or State to interfere, therefore the community should interfere in none, but should leave everything to be effected by voluntary effort....Is the illumination of our streets to be considered all-important, and is the lighting-up of the lamp of knowledge in the souls of darkened millions to be deemed matter of no concern to the community as such?....If it be right to provide a library, it cannot be wrong to teach to read; if it be just in principle for the State to provide the means of intellectual gratification, it cannot be unjust to afford the necessary preparation for its enjoyment....The object to be attained is the communication of that knowledge which shall fit a man to understand his social duties and duly to perform his part in relation to this world. This is common ground on which all can meet, and beyond this the community has no right to proceed. Religious liberty should be absolute, or it is worthless. There cannot justly exist any modification of it. The rights of conscience must be held paramount to all mere human laws....The practicability of the system of education which we advocate has already been proved with the most complete success in the New England States of America....But this system is called irreligious, godless, and inimical to religion. Could I bring my mind to this conclusion, I should regard the system with the utmost abhorrence. I have been engaged as a Sunday-school teacher for the last twenty-five years, in attempting to communicate religious instruction to the young, and sooner would I consent to this right arm being severed from my body than it should be upheld in the support of any project adverse to religious truth. It is because I consider this system most favourable to religious teaching that I give it my warmest support. Let us look at the question fairly....A newspaper is not of necessity irreligious, unless it contain a theological treatise or a sermon. The utmost that can fairly be said is that secular teaching is incomplete; but it is good as far as it goes. Now what have religious teachers principally to contend with?....Not so much, I will take upon myself to say, the actual prevalence of vice in the young as a degree of mental apathy or brutal ignorance, to remove which (in Sunday-schools) often involves a most serious waste of time and labour....A system,

therefore, which should remove this obstacle, so far from being unfriendly to religion, ought to be looked on as its most powerful auxiliary. But again the communication of religious instruction<sup>1</sup> requires a different mode of treatment from secular instruction. In the latter some degree of coercion is absolutely necessary, and the attempt to combine the two in simultaneous instruction is too often nominal rather than real, a profession rather than a practice. The element of religion should be love; its teaching should be the voluntary effusion of a devoted heart. The affections of the young should be called into play, and everything should partake of the gentle and healing influences of Him who 'spake as never man spake.' In thus enlightening the minds of the young, and fitting them for the reception of religious truth, I believe we are acting in accordance with the precepts of the divine Redeemer, who instructed his disciples to 'render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's.'

"No patriotic mind can look abroad on the heaving masses of life around us increasing daily in consciousness of strength, without some degree of apprehension arising, not from the character of our countrymen's hearts, but from the ignorance and darkness of their minds. The heart of the Englishman still swells with the same generous and manly emotions as it has ever done. The same hatred of oppression, the same love of order, the same sense of justice and right, still form the leading features of his character. But he is dark and longs for light. Shall it not be given him? He thirsts for knowledge. Shall not its refreshing streams be poured into his soul? Justice, kindness, safety, patriotism, all answer yes! 'Wisdom and knowledge must be the stability of our times; then may we hope that the fear of the Lord will be our treasure.'"

Justice and patriotism may have answered "Yes," but sectarianism answered "No." And in the sequel it was seen that the latter voice was, unfortunately, more potent than was expected by such guileless prophets as the speaker.

Of course, such a proposal as the above was open to obvious criticism, on account of its suggested

<sup>1</sup> What the speaker had in his mind was not the teaching of Jewish history, which of course, if sincerity were allowed, might be communicated as easily as Greek or Roman myths, but rather the conveyance of "grace and truth."

separation of things inseparable. But many advocates of so-called "secular" schools were quite as well aware as their critics that the distinction between things sacred and secular is purely arbitrary. They knew that a religion of daily life—of reverence, of devotion, of enthusiasm for good—was worth more than all the rules of arithmetic, but that it might, and would be, taught, or rather inspired, by a good man or good woman even in the process of teaching those rules. They could not, however, quite see how it was possible for such a religion of daily life to be naturally or effectively taught in a course of Bible lessons wherein the good man or good woman was forced to tell lies. And this they held must be the result in a good many instances if teachers were accepted without any profession of creed, but expected to teach the average creed of the nation, whether they believed it or not.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The following observations by a man from whom I should have expected something different, Mr. Frederick Rogers, occurred in a descriptive article written by him on the Trades Union Congress at Swansea for the *Westminster Gazette* of September 9th, 1901: "The Cockerton judgment and the Government action are rousing the workmen, and not before it was time. With a better organisation of sub-committees this year, the numerous resolutions were made into one, and this affirmed that all grades of education should, in districts of suitable size, be put under one local authority; that more free scholarships should be available, that adequate provision for the representation of labour on the Board should exist, and that training colleges and schools alike should be 'free from unsectarian bias.' For the first time, too, in Congress, the demand for secular education disappeared. The truth is, the cry for secular education has represented a reaction rather than a conviction, and the secularist in education is gradually getting found out. He has descended in a direct line from Mr. Gradgrind of Coketown, and his influence where it has had full sway has been in education pretty much what that worthy's was in social life." The assumption that morality, if taught apart from superstition, must necessarily be materialistic, is scarcely worthy of the writer. He would say, of course, that School-Board religion is not superstition. But suppose it appears so to any considerable number of teachers required to teach it? what then? (See p. 53.)

Now, this difficulty might be avoided in one of three ways—either by allowing every teacher to use the Bible just as he would any other book, and to say of it precisely what he felt, just as he would about the *Pilgrim's Progress* or *Paradise Lost*; or, secondly, by allowing only the use of an authorised selection of Bible extracts illustrating the beauty of goodness; or, finally, as suggested by the so-called "Secularists," by keeping the Bible out altogether. The first solution is, of course, abstractly the right one, and in five hundred years will probably be adopted. But, so long as any considerable section of the people regard the Bible as miraculous and infallible, that solution is impossible. And this should be remembered by liberal sentimentalists, who talk about the Bible as a "classic," which it would be vandalism to exclude from the schools. The second solution, the selection of non-controversial passages, was advocated by the late Professor Huxley. But when he realised his failure, and saw what came of it, he was candid enough to own that the third solution would have worked practically better than his.<sup>1</sup> Those who advocate this solution quite share the regret of liberal religionists that our great colonies and the United States have found it necessary generally to exclude or severely to limit in their primary schools the use of so precious an inheritance from great times of old. They would most of them even agree that the expedient is a humiliating one. But, then, they do not think that the humiliation attaches to those who would treat the Bible like any other book. They rather think it falls on those who persist in investing

In a conversation with myself.

it with unreal attributes, such as forbid truth and sincerity in using it.

The idea of a book absolutely without an error is now generally, even by most of the religious sects, regarded as a figment of the ages of ignorance. But, while the possibility of error is allowed, the admission of its actual presence is guarded and limited by considerations which have no relation whatever to evidence. It is, I believe, common now for school-masters who know anything of geology to explain to their pupils that in the Mosaic account of creation the word "day" does not mean twenty-four hours, but an indefinite period of time. Yet those teachers whose culture enables them to estimate the force of congruity in determining the meaning of words, whether in literature or law, must feel sure that the six-times repeated refrain, "The evening and the morning were the——day," determines beyond question the intention of the writer to picture an ordinary day of twenty-four hours. Such teachers may know that various ancient commentators have felt the need of a larger space of time for so majestic a work. But this does not affect the impression made on their common sense that when a man of Hebrew race wrote "evening and morning" he must certainly have had in his mind the ordinary Jewish mode of reckoning from sunset to sunset. If, therefore, he tells his young students of truth that the sacred writer meant thousands of ages when he wrote "days" this teacher knows in his heart of hearts that he is not speaking the truth required at the moment.

It does not in the least matter whether the view here taken as to the significance of "evening and morning" be correct or not. The point is that it

is conscientiously held by a large number of educated teachers who are required to teach the Bible to children as a divine and infallible book. And, of course, this special detail as to the meaning of the six days is only fixed upon for distinctness of illustration. But let us leave that detail, or suppose it obscured in a haze of generalities about the undeniable dignity and occasional sublimity of the Bible story of creation. From the "Broad Church" point of view we are told that, whatever may be the sacred writer's errors in science, no ancient myth, no poetic imagination of uninspired men, ever so nearly approximated to the actual facts of the earth's origin and development as recorded in the rocks. Be it so—at least, for the purpose of our present argument. Then let the teacher be free to tell this to his pupils; and, if he is a man who happens to know where the narrative came from, let him be free to tell his pupils further that it is a revised and improved edition of a story found inscribed on clay tablets among the ruins of Babylon.

Certainly, if he were allowed to take this course, he would be saved from much humiliating prevarication about the "firmament in the midst of the waters," "dividing the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament," and about the grass and herbs and fruit-trees which brought forth seeds and fruit before the sun was made, and about the creation of birds before the "creeping thing and beast of the earth." He might most honestly tell the children that, with all its mistakes, the first chapter of Genesis is a most precious and touching record of a devout soul's effort to find the secret of the world in God. But the

requirement that he shall set it forth as a direct revelation from the Creator of what he did before there was any man to see it is surely a sore strain on any morality in which truth has its proper place.

The conservators of a decaying creed, however, demur to any such freedom on the part of teachers. "We pay our rates," they say, "or we give our school subscriptions to have the Bible taught in its simplicity as the word of God. It would be an outrage on our conscience if teachers were allowed to treat it as a human book." And the advocates of a rate-aided Gospel in Board schools would add that it is not sectarian religion they want—not, for instance, the Independent theory of church government, nor Presbyterianism, nor infant baptism, nor any such high matters, but only the simple truths of the Trinity and the Incarnation, and the Atonement, and immortality in heaven or hell, and salvation by the blood of Jesus. A good man whose notion of catholic comprehension is embodied in the Union of the Evangelical Free Churches cannot conceive that there is any touch of sectarianism in Board-school religion as thus defined. Perhaps he never meets with any one who does not hold the simple gospel composed of those doctrines. And if he hears that such eccentric heretics really do exist, he waves them out of sight with such phrases as "entirely exceptional" and "negligible minority." Whether that answer to the conscientious plea raised by these heretics is in accordance with fact will be a question for our consideration later. Meantime I would only observe that the "Non-conformist conscience" has not always been content to measure its own rights by the size of the minority it represented. I am old enough to remember times

## THE BIBLE IN SCHOOL

16

when the existence of even ten righteous men conscientiously objecting to pay their parish church rates, though there might be five hundred anxious to pay, was thought by good Nonconformists quite a sufficient reason for resistance, even at the cost of distrainment or imprisonment.

While freely granting that in this preliminary statement of the issue there are involved many incidental points on which I can have no hope of sympathy from the majority, yet, if the substance of it be summarised, I do not see how it can be denied without contradiction of patent facts notorious to all. Who will dispute that on the relations of religion to moral instruction, and of the Bible to religion, discordant and irreconcileable opinions are held with equal intensity of conviction by many of the worthiest members of the commonwealth? But those differences are more than merely intellectual divergences. They touch on deepest faiths and inspiring hopes and infinite fears. They are the clash of mutually-contradictory oracles held by opponents in the debate to be the divinest utterance of their deepest and most real being. Indeed, the differences are such that, if the opinions of any one group are adopted as the law of the people's schools, all other citizens must suffer painful and dishonourable disabilities. No matter what may be the selection made, whether the opinions of Conformists or Nonconformists, of Catholics or Protestants, of Rationalists or of "unsectarian" Evangelicals, all the rest must endure what they regard as the perversion of the State's authority and resources to mischievous and demoralising uses. As ratepayers they must support out of their wages or wealth the

propagation into the new age of doctrines which they detest. As teachers they must either play the hypocrite or take an inferior position. As parents they must either acquiesce in the instillation into their children's tender minds of what to their parental affection seems dangerous poison, or, by availing themselves of the "Conscience Clause," they must inflict on their families the fate of little pariahs during all their school hours. As citizens they must submit to have the whole moral energy of the land they love devoted to immortalising errors which, according to their point of view, may be superstitious or godless, loose and latitudinarian, or promotive of priestcraft, as the case may be.

## II.

### RELIGIOUS EQUALITY

"Religious equality" has too often been interpreted to mean equality of privilege for Christian sects. We have not yet outgrown the feeble tolerance of kindly Commonwealth Puritans who would extend the protection of the law to Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, and even Quakers, but who would bore with a hot iron the tongue of a man who should openly deny Christianity. Modern sentiment, indeed, protects us from too close an imitation of seventeenth-century practice in this respect. But in the assumption that the claim to religious equality before the law is morally invalid in the case of Unitarians, Rationalists, Pantheists,<sup>1</sup> and Agnostics, the germ of the old cruelty still survives. Now that is just the assumption which has underlain all nineteenth-century discussion by liberal Christians of the rights of ultra-Rationalists,

<sup>1</sup> If I do not mention "Atheists," it is because I do not recognise the term as properly applicable to any actual form of belief or unbelief. I never met, nor do I expect ever to meet, a man who would deny that being is eternal. All the self-styled "Atheists" I have ever known have simply denied that my idea of God, or any other idea of God, answers to their notion of eternal being. I am bound to respect their negative attitude. But I should call it Agnosticism, not Atheism. When I find a man who positively denies that there is anything eternal, or, in other words, who thinks that at one moment—so to speak—in the infinite past there was nothing, and at the next moment there was everything, or "the promise and potency" of everything, I will allow him the name of Atheist. But I shall not feel bound to respect his intellect.

or disbelievers in any revelation made by a personal God.

The "Broad Churchman" repudiates with honest indignation any lingering desire to subject even the "Infidel" to secular pains and penalties on account of his unbelief. But he retains an equally honest conviction that the "Infidel," by his alleged voluntary alienation from the spiritual life of the Commonwealth, has forfeited any claim to equal consideration with Christians on any question affecting the establishment, endowment, or other public expression of the national religion. This description of the attitude of liberal Christians toward ultra-Rationalists can hardly be accused of exaggeration. Indeed, there are not a few amongst the former whose objection to the unrestricted citizenship of the "Infidel" is much more distinct. They say that he dishonours their God and Saviour, and that, though they hope his invincible ignorance may be leniently considered by the Supreme Judge, yet they cannot consent to involve the nation in moral peril by extending to him a "religious equality" inapplicable to irreligion.

It may be readily acknowledged that from this point of view the problem of religious equality raises issues far too vast to be adequately treated in connection with the right use of the Bible in the nation's schools. But it will presently be seen that, though we cannot help indicating those larger issues, we do not need to lose ourselves in them. For even if we grant, which I, for one, absolutely decline to do, that for the public expression or recognition of the nation's religious life the legal recognition of the Bible is desirable—as, for instance, in the Coronation service, and in swearing witnesses—yet every one must surely acknowledge that

if any particular public use of the Bible involves hypocrisy and lying, that use becomes a sacrilege, because, in theological language, it desecrates the vessels of the Temple by devoting them to the service of Satan. Now, precisely this is actually involved in the use of the Bible in schools according to the great Smith "compromise." Such an objection can only be met by asserting that the desecration is not inherent in the legal usage of the book, but in the infidelity or extreme rationalism of those who cannot use it aright. And this necessarily involves the corollary that none who are unable honestly to use the Bible in accordance with prevalent opinion ought to accept any office in which such use is required. Now that means practically the exclusion of all who cannot accept the residuum of Biblical belief common to Anglicans, Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, and Methodists. The full justification of this assertion must be reserved for a later stage of the argument, when we come to discuss more particularly the position of teachers under the present order of things. Meanwhile I only assume that, if this be so, it raises the question of religious equality for Rationalists in a practical and limited form, such as need not carry us very far into the vast issues suggested above.

We need not, for instance, discuss the Broad Church idea that individual alienation from the spiritual life of the Commonwealth may justify the exclusion of that individual from entire religious equality. For obviously we have to do here, not with the spiritual life of the nation, but with the Biblical theories which a national school teacher is, as a matter of course, expected to hold and enforce. It is all very well to say that "theories" are not

expected, but practical teaching. But if the practical point be the historical truth of the six days' creation, or of the conversation of Eve and the Serpent, or of the argument of Balaam's ass with its master, or the three days' lodging of Jonah in the belly of a whale, it is difficult to see how Biblical theory can be excluded from its bearing on the conscience of the teacher. Either the teacher holds that the accuracy of such narratives is guaranteed by an authority independent of historical evidence, or he does not. If he holds the former theory, he can, of course, honestly teach these stories as narratives of fact. But if he does not hold it, even the chance hints occasionally let fall in the secular history lessons of a theological training college for teachers are enough to convince him that of historical evidence for such stories there is not the faintest shadow of a shade. And unless he have a mind exceptionally impervious to the echoes of criticism in the air, he feels in his inmost soul that, however useful as parables or otherwise those old-world tales may be, they have no claim to be treated as historically true.

We are not, however, at this point concerned with the special difficulties of intelligent teachers. I have referred to the effect of historical lessons in training colleges only as suggestive of the far more pronounced scepticism pervading the wider circles of moderately-educated people, who are under less temptation to a biased judgment. And if I use the word "scepticism," I take it in its proper and original sense of an inquiring spirit. I do not say, and I do not believe, that more than one-tenth, if so many, of English-speaking people reject the idea of a divine revelation given them in the Bible. But I do

maintain, because the tone of our current literature of social conversation proves it, that the old matter-of-course assumption of the divinely-guaranteed historic accuracy of the Hexateuch, and the books of Judges, Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, has entirely disappeared from all circles of tolerably well-educated society. No literary aspirant to the pages of our most-eminently respectable monthly magazines has now the slightest hesitation in treating the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch as a figment of the Great Sanhedrim, or of unsupported tradition. The popularity of the late Professor Huxley's controversial essays cannot be wholly explained by their brightness and vigour. Admiring readers might not go all lengths with him in his negative conclusions. But they were not revolted by his claim to treat the Bible on the common-sense principles that he applied to science; and even this extent of acquiescence involved an immense shifting of the foundations on which their ideas of cosmic and human origins, as well as of Judaism and Christianity, had hitherto rested.

Reference to one contemporary fact alone may save us a good deal of detail. Take the "Polychrome Bible," one of the most remarkable achievements of sacred scholarship that even this age can show. It is still far from completion, and no one need be surprised if so vast a work advances slowly under many difficulties. But its progress and its circulation give ample proof of the tendency amongst great Biblical scholars to conform their "criticism" of the sacred volume to the principles they would adopt in regard to any other book, and also of the appreciation with which such an effort is received by the Christian world. To describe it shortly, it is an edition of the

Hebrew Scriptures with a new translation, accompanied by brief pregnant notes and a very few pictorial illustrations. The feature from which it derives its name is the variegated colouring of the pages designed to show at a glance the various documents from which the Hebrew Scriptures, as we have them, are believed by the editors to have been compiled. The treatment is entirely and unreservedly free—as much so as if the subject were the Vedas or the Zendavesta. It is at the same time profoundly reverential, as is indeed most becoming whenever or wherever we study genuine records of man's struggle upwards from the passions of the brute to the eternal life. The result, however, is a version subversive of many, or indeed most, of our traditional ideas of the Bible. The translation, if it is correct, which, so far as my knowledge goes, I believe it generally is, would often make the evangelical interpretation of crucial passages obviously impossible.<sup>1</sup> The Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch is so entirely rejected that the earliest documents therein of any length and importance are attributed to the latter part of the ninth century B.C., while the narrative of creation in Genesis i. and Levitical regulations, long defended as Mosaic, if nothing else was, are regarded as the work of exiled Jews in Babylon about 500 B.C. The Prophecies of Isaiah are assigned to a number of sacred bards, amongst whom the Isaiah of former evangelical divines occupies a limited though luminous space. The Psalms are “the hymn book of the second Temple.” We are told that “it is not a question whether there be any post-exilic Psalms, but rather

<sup>1</sup> E.g., Isaiah vii. 14, where for “virgin” we read “young woman.”

whether the Psalms contain any poems written before the exile."<sup>1</sup>

Lest it should be supposed that I am setting up these editors as an infallible authority, I may say, in passing, that I am not myself inclined to accept their judgment as to the Psalms. But, in justification of such audacity on the part of a very imperfect Hebrew scholar, I could only urge the general analogy of literary history. So far as my reading goes, the highest poetic genius of a race is manifested in its period of growth, and not during its decay. If the reverse was the case with the Hebrews, it would be an anomaly so singular that I should like more proof of it than is given by the Polychrome Bible editors. My point, however, is not the amount of importance to be attributed to the scholarly judgment of the learned men responsible for this great work, but rather their representative position in the world of religious thought. Had they been condemned heretics, "aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel," it might be said that their views are exceptional and eccentric, at any rate of no value as evidence of the trend of opinion. But so far is this from being a correct description that the editors are all of them men of high position and some of distinguished fame in English, American, or German Universities, and in communion with national churches or other great and respected Christian denominations. The chief editor is Dr. Paul Haupt,

<sup>1</sup> Psalm lxxii., e.g., so long considered to be a description of the reign of Christ, is regarded as an ode in honour of some Ptolemaic king of Egypt. This, however, is no reason why the devout soul should not apply it to the spiritual reign of Christ, of which, as an ideal, it is a beautiful description. But the devout soul should do this intelligently, with the full consciousness that it is a case of adaptation, and not of miraculous foresight, just as with a similar use of the fourth Eclogue of Virgil.

Professor of Hebrew and the cognate languages in the Johns Hopkins' University, Baltimore, and until 1889 Professor Extraordinarius of Assyriology in the University of Göttingen, Hanover. Isaiah has been edited by Dr. T. K. Cheyne, Canon of Rochester, and Oriel Professor of the Interpretation of Holy Scripture at Oxford. Exodus has been treated by Dr. Herbert E. Ryle, Hulsean Professor of Divinity and President of King's College, Cambridge; the Book of Numbers by Dr. J. A. Paterson, Professor at the Theological Seminary, Edinburgh; and Deuteronomy by Dr. George A. Smith, Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament Exegesis at the Free Church College, Glasgow. There is no need to give the rest of the thirty-eight names. With the exception of one Unitarian gentleman and two Jewish scholars, the three editors of two minor books, all of them would be recognised as official representatives of moderate orthodoxy in religion. Nor can it be said that theirs are voices crying in the wilderness. Before such a vast and unremunerative work could be begun a large sum of money—£25,000, I believe—was raised by members of American churches; and the sale, so far as the volumes have been issued, has been sufficient to prove an extensive demand among professedly Christian believers for literature of the kind.

The inference I ask to be allowed to draw from facts like this is not an extravagant one. It is not that the majority of the people in England or America have been converted to pure Rationalism, but only that it is unjust and absurd to say that the rejectors of the historical accuracy of the Bible are a negligible quantity, eccentric heretics, aliens from the spiritual life of their race, and therefore rightly

subjected to religious disabilities where questions of national education are concerned.

Probably many of my liberal religious readers will think that I have taken a great deal of unnecessary trouble to arrive at an obvious conclusion. Of course that is so, they will say; but where are the religious disabilities? My answer is that those disabilities are twofold—first, denial to them of the just rights of conscience; second, exclusion from honest and self-respecting service of the nation as teachers in its public schools. I grant that if they can consent to a colourable hypocrisy they are not excluded; but if any one holds that eligibility to appointment under such a condition constitutes religious equality, with him I will not argue. I was brought up in a different school, and I think it is a loss to the passing generation that the principles of that school are, for the moment, out of fashion.

### III.

## THE NEW CHURCH RATE

BEFORE the year 1870 the Nonconformists held that it is wrong, unjust, and even cruel, to make a man pay for the maintenance and spread of what he holds to be religious error. I am old-fashioned enough to be of the same opinion still. The sentimental generalities of "Broad Church" men, which appear singularly attractive to Nonconformist "perverts"—like the late Right Hon. W. E. Forster—have on this subject blurred the boundary lines of right and wrong in the minds of many influential men of Puritan traditions. Men like the late Edward Miall, they say, were wrong in assuming that there is a clear and straight-cut dividing-line between things "sacred" and "secular." They were wrong, also, in assuming that a national or municipal government ought of right to confine itself to a policy of water and gas, of sewage and sanitation. They were wrong, again, in conceiving of government as a corporate policeman, whose only duty is to keep individual citizens from wronging each other. If the life of a man should be treated as a whole, and not as a mosaic of religion, morality, business, and politics, so ought the life of a nation to be treated as a whole. From that point of view the business of a Government is to foster and co-ordinate all healthy forms of the national energy, whether ticketed as religious or secular, social

or commercial, æsthetic or practical, individual or collective. Nor is this reaction against "administrative nihilism" confined to Broad Churchmen and Non-conformists. It has generally the support of the Ethical Societies and their organs, amongst whose aims the substitution of non-theological ethics for religious instruction in the nation's schools is prominent. I do not understand, however, that the supporters of the Ethical Movement desire to make the denial of revelation a part of our school teaching, still less to extort rates from the pockets of devout evangelicals for the support of such teaching.

It is at this point that I find a limit to the generous theories of the State's function, which have so largely superseded that of the corporate policeman. There are, I believe, other limits; for many methods of social action derive all their charm and effectiveness from voluntary impulse, and are practically paralysed if this be superseded by law. But we are concerned at present only with the particular limit that comes into view when religion is touched. It was from this point of view only that the Nonconformist opponents of church rates could be justified. In extorting from them by force the support of transcendental<sup>1</sup> doctrines that they condemned, an indefensible wrong was done to their conscientious convictions. This has now been conceded to them. But most of the survivors of that struggle appear strangely blind to the bearing of their own arguments on the School Board rate, so far as it is spent on the present Bible teaching.

<sup>1</sup> I use this epithet to describe doctrines going beyond the sort of matter-of-fact evidence usually required for justice or legislation, and also outside the practical necessities of citizen life.

I am one of a school at present "everywhere spoken against," who, just because we prize the Bible highly, regret very much to see the venerable Book misused as it is in our schools. Its value to us consists not in any revelation, or any otherwise inaccessible information supposed to be found in its pages, but in the unrivalled power of spiritual and moral inspiration inherent in its noblest utterances. Through all our changes of opinion, surviving all denials forced on us by evidence and honesty, rising triumphantly from the scientific grave to which a dead creed has been committed, that power seems to us indestructible, immortal. We do not think of the Bible less; we think far more of it than when we believed in Eve's apple and Balaam's ass. For then it represented to us a series of violent dislocations of the order of nature. But now the Bible is to us an age-long vision of truth disentangling itself from error, of right slowly conquering wrong, of the emergence through the illusions and lies and sufferings and struggles and passions and aspirations of mankind of that more perfect state which, if the earth last long enough, must bless some future generation, and which, by its consummation of past, present, and future in one consciousness, may well be called the eternal life, or even "the fulness of the godhead bodily."

We think such a Book degraded to low uses when it is enthroned as a fetish, before which judgment and reason grovel in the dust of superstition. And we protest against being made to pay for such sacrilege. Indeed, the wrong done to conscience in our case is much more offensive than anything that could be alleged by our predecessors under church rates. For, after all, our evangelical fathers and grandfathers

agreed almost entirely with the religious and moral teaching of the Established Church. Their points of difference touched only ecclesiastical order and sacraments, which, however important in their view, could hardly be said to affect fundamental morality. But we, in these times, are forced to support a system which we not only suspect, but know by experience, to be utterly inconsistent with a cultivation of that "truth in the inward parts" which in the Bible itself the Eternal is said to require.

I am not so foolish as to hold that legal compulsion is necessarily barred the moment any plea of individual conscience is raised. I fully acknowledge also the difficulty of drawing a clear line between legitimate and illegitimate pleas of conscience. Nor is it essential to attempt it here. I confine myself to one class of cases in which it seems unjust and cruel to reject the plea. But I will offer one or two suggestions on the general question.

In matters on which public opinion is much divided by differences depending on sentiment rather than on evidence it is always dangerous for authority to be intolerant of conscience in recusants. Further, if the differences concern transcendental questions, with no immediate or obvious bearing on the practical life of the commonwealth, such intolerance is more than dangerous; it is wrong. For one need not be a fanatical "individualist" to hold that some inner sources of individual character and will are of priceless worth to the community, and should be held sacred in every man. Among these we may surely count the individual feeling of solitary responsibility to eternal Power for personal loyalty to its rule. Without this, indeed, we have no true

commonwealth at all. For any group of creatures who fulfil instinctively and unconsciously separate functions of convergent advantage to the whole of that group are more on the level of a hive than of a commonwealth. To this latter some intelligent consciousness of subordination to a common end is necessary, and this cannot be permanently secured without individual loyalty to a control higher than institutions and more comprehensive than the State. It was an inarticulate feeling of this truth which led the ancients to insist so much on religion as the sanction of patriotism. This also was what St. Paul had in mind when he said, perhaps too indiscriminately: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God..... Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but for conscience sake." But when the loyalties clashed St. Paul resolutely obeyed the higher. It has taken the rulers of this world a long time to find out that it is precisely such men who, if only their conscience be respected, make the best citizens. In fact, records of our own time—such as some of the proceedings under the so-called Blasphemy Laws, and also under the Church Discipline Acts—show that the lesson has not even yet been perfectly learned. But we have surely got so far that, if any wrong done to conscience is clearly made out, public opinion will insist on finding a remedy, lest so precious an inspiration as that of individual loyalty to truth and right should suffer sacrilege. My plea is that such a wrong is done by the present system of Bible instruction in public schools.

Before leaving this part of the subject, however, let

me try to show how such reasonable claims of the religious conscience as are here raised may be distinguished from perverse individual revolts against salutary State regulations. I will take the case of the self-styled "Peculiar People," a case by no means easy to deal with, but one which an advocate of conscience rights ought not to shirk. If I understand the position of these people rightly, it is their conscientious conviction that the Bible requires them in cases of sickness to depend on direct divine healing, without the intervention of a human physician. I am not competent to discuss the legal difficulties which thus arise. How far any man, whether a "peculiar" brother or not, can be compelled to ask and act on medical advice for his child, just as he is compelled to obtain "efficient instruction" for that child, I am not lawyer enough to say. He is not compelled to go to the schoolmaster for his child's instruction if he can ensure it in some other manner. It might be plausibly asked: Why, then, should he be compelled to go to the physician for medical aid if he can obtain it in some other manner? But "there is much virtue in an 'if.'" The legal view, or, at any rate, the common-sense view—which lawyers tell me is the same thing—is that the "if" here does in many cases introduce an impossible, and therefore unreal, alternative. What the law requires is that the parent shall do all within his power to prevent unnecessary suffering to his child, and still more to save its life. Whether he be rich or poor, it is within his power to obtain medical aid, and there are cases in which legal evidence can prove that medical aid, so far as human judgment can discern, would make all the difference between life and death. In such cases

"conscientious" objection to medical aid does not come under the conditions laid down above as defining the rights of conscience.<sup>1</sup> It may be, indeed, a case of false sentiment, but it is still more a stolid refusal of evidence. Transcendental doctrine may, indeed, be involved, and on that the parent may keep his own opinion. But sickness and healing are matters of physiology rather than of mysticism. They have a palpable and immediate bearing on the practical life of the commonwealth. Where this is the case, and where the requirement of medical aid is based upon an overwhelming consensus of experience and opinion, the community is abundantly justified in telling the recalcitrant parent to keep his scruples for the kingdom of heaven, and to render his due obedience to the kingdom of this world.

The conscientious objector to vaccination may claim to be in a different and a stronger position, not because his conscience is more sacred than that of the "Peculiar" person, but simply because there is not the same overwhelming consensus of experience and opinion to support compulsory vaccination as there is to support compulsory recourse to medical aid for serious illness. If experience had confirmed Jenner's assertion that one good vaccination would make the patient insusceptible to small-pox for the remainder of his life, the probability is that the question of compulsion would never have arisen. The popularity at one time of the far more dangerous system of inoculation shows how anxious people were to protect themselves. It is impossible to suppose that, if no cases of small-pox after vaccination had been

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 30-1.

known, such a marvellous preventive would have needed enforcement by fine or imprisonment. But if, contrary to probability, resistance had been encountered, a claim to exemption on conscientious grounds would have had small chance of sympathy in the face of such overwhelming proof of a palpable and obvious benefit to the practical life of the community. Even to the plea that a man might well be allowed to leave his own children unvaccinated, seeing that all others could, if they chose, be guaranteed by this infallible antidote against danger from his neglect, it might perhaps justly be replied that he would be exposing his own children to unnecessary danger and suffering contrary to the spirit of modern law. But all such arguments are annulled by the now notorious fact that the vaccinated sufferers from small-pox outnumber the unvaccinated in about the same proportion as the vaccinated bear to the unvaccinated in the whole population. If a man draws from this fact the conclusion that the alleged preventive makes no difference, but practically leaves things just as they would be were vaccination entirely abolished, I do not say that he would be unanswerable; but I do say that it is unjust to treat him as an obstinate fanatic or a traitor to society. This, in fact, is just what the recent law has recognised by excusing from compulsion all who, in proper form, make a declaration of conscientious objection. In other words, the case is authoritatively pronounced to be one in which the plea of conscience cannot justly be ignored.

I will take yet another case to elucidate the principle suggested above as a test of the rights of conscience. The other day I observed in the newspapers the report of a sale by legal order of certain goods

belonging to a worthy Quaker who had refused to pay his taxes because of the South African war. He would not voluntarily support bloodshed, and therefore took joyfully the spoiling of his goods. But, with all respect for one who is clearly a man of high character and strong individuality, I hold his plea to be entirely illegitimate. The maintenance of peace and the making of war both belong to the practical material life of the commonwealth. In such matters, if it is to act at all, it must act as a whole. There may be, and there nearly always is, division of opinion. But the majority determines the action, and it is carried out as the action of the whole. On no other conceivable plan could a *commonwealth* exist at all. This action as a whole, however, is only secured by the subordination of the wills and opinions of the minority to those of the majority. After doing all they can to secure that right counsels should prevail, the minority are no longer responsible in *foro conscientie*. To refuse at least passive obedience to the general voice in a matter strictly within the functions of a commonwealth would be to invalidate social order. Of course social order may sometimes be so bad that it ought to be invalidated. And in that case chaos must be endured for a while that a better order may succeed. But such extreme crises are very exceptional, and perhaps they never arise unless the commonwealth, or those who usurp its powers, have exceeded its functions of organising the practical, earthly (or, if we may use the word, secular) life. This happened in the seventeenth century in England, and it is the chronic state of things in Russia. But to say that the act of the community in making war can justify those who object to it in refusing to pay

taxes would be to declare any commonwealth impossible and to assert the principle of anarchism.

The conscientious objection felt by an increasing number of English people to be made to pay for the present Bible-teaching in the nation's schools is not open to any such condemnation. Such teaching cannot fairly be described as one of those public functions in which the commonwealth, if it act at all, must act as a whole. Indeed, so far as Board schools are concerned, such an assumption has been solemnly repudiated by Parliament in the Act of 1870. That Act does, indeed, forbid any "creed or formulary distinctive of any particular denomination"—a prohibition found perfectly consistent with strongly dogmatic teaching. But it does not require that there shall be any religious teaching at all. It throws the odium of persecution on the local authority. Even in the elementary schools of the National Society and the British and Foreign School Society the State now declines any responsibility for religion except so far as concerns the maintenance of the "Conscience Clause." It does not examine in religion, and it does not "inspect" religious instruction. It is clear, therefore, that in modern statecraft the support of religious teaching is not placed on a par with the maintenance of war, or with the provision of secular instruction as the duty of the whole commonwealth acting together. Further, it cannot reasonably be said in defence of Board-school practice that the infallibility of the Bible or its historic accuracy, or the transcendental doctrines taught from it, have a palpable or necessary bearing on the practical life of the nation. If, therefore, any Rationalist were moved by his conscience to refuse to pay his school rate

because it is applied to propagate "free church" dogmas, his conduct would certainly not be open to the same criticism as that of the conscientious Quaker mentioned above. And if the evangelical Nonconformists were right, as I presume they still think they were, in objecting to pay Church rates, they ought to realise the gross inconsistency of which they are guilty in compelling nonconformists to their creed to pay for teaching it. This is in flagrant contradiction to the doctrine of religious equality which, with stammering tongues, they still assert.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>. Survivors, if there are any, of the noble army of "Church-rate martyrs" might ask why Rationalist nonconformity does not prove its sincerity by a similar martyrdom. It is a question of proportion. Unbelievers in supernatural religion have sometimes gone to prison, or suffered odious wrong in law courts, rather than play the hypocrite. But the devotion of part of a rate to a purpose they disapprove, while they heartily applaud the use of the greater part of it, hardly seems to justify martyrdom. The Church rate was devoted wholly to church uses. It would be scarcely becoming in the advocates of religious equality, as the right of a free-born Englishman, to urge that a man must have his goods distrained before he can fairly claim that right.

#### IV.

### NEW RELIGIOUS DISABILITIES

RELIGIOUS equality is also outraged by the exclusion of non-Evangelical Nonconformists from honest and self-respecting service of the nation in its public schools. This is a wrong which cannot, of course, be felt so widely as the last, because, naturally, those born with a vocation to teaching are a small minority. But where this particular form of injustice strikes it is felt with a special bitterness. And the number whom it affects is rapidly increasing. I do not mean merely that the number of silent protestants against the spiritual residuum constituting "School-Board religion" is increasing, but that the number among them who find either open or tacit hypocrisy intolerable is rapidly growing. In proportion as the impossibility of retaining the old beliefs becomes more widely felt the demand for relief from any pretence of believing them becomes more urgent. There has been a great change in the theology of the middle classes during the later years of the nineteenth century. Even so recently as the School Board era of 1870, the sharpness of the issue between the creed of the Evangelical Alliance and actual fact was not generally realised with anything like the same distinctness as now. The significance of Assyrian and Egyptian records had not been grasped except by a very few profound scholars. The

Tell Amarna Tablets, with their revelation of the condition of Palestine about the time assigned to the Mosaic exodus, had not been discovered. The inscription of Menephthah, recording a victory over certain "Israhili" in North Palestine, about the date when he was supposed to have been drowned in a mad pursuit of Israel through the Red Sea, was as yet unknown. So far as the spade had then recovered the past of sacred lands, it was believed that the correspondence of Egyptian, Assyrian, and Chaldean ceremonies and forms of worship with Biblical references confirmed the Scripture record ; while the actual occurrence in inscriptions of names mentioned in the Old Testament was thought to have finally settled the question of its historical veracity. It is true that the epoch-making book of Darwin had been published eleven years before. But even among scientific men there was considerable hesitation in applying the theory of natural selection to man. And religious liberals who toyed with edged tools dwelt fondly on the absence of the "missing link."

While such was the state of popular knowledge and opinion, it was not difficult for conscientious teachers of the young to find relief in suspense of judgment. Members of a profession largely under clerical influence, and charged quite as much with the moral as with the intellectual training of their pupils, were naturally predisposed to believe that it was their duty in the meantime to go on teaching "divinity" as it had been taught to them. Comfort was found in the reflection that God's voice in nature and God's word in the Bible could not possibly contradict each other ; and the meaning given to both terms remained so very vague that there was ample scope for temporary

accommodation. Even in cases where inconveniently definite questions were asked, it was always possible for instruction to disappear in a haze of reverence. "Do you think, sir, that we must take this literally?" asked a boy in a class studying the ass's argument with Balaam. "Such an occurrence," replied the master, "is so very remarkable, and, indeed, unparalleled, that in the present state of our knowledge I would rather not give an opinion. Perhaps there is some explanation of which we are not at present aware." So long as this kind of mental attitude remained possible the disabilities of doubt were not acutely felt. The supposed foundations of morality could be accepted as they stood, with an acknowledgment that their relation to the foundations of knowledge was an unsolved question.

But the state of things is very different now. The surrender of the historic accuracy of a large part of the Old Testament is so general that a very considerable number of teachers are conscious of a clear contradiction between what they are expected to teach and what they themselves believe. It is difficult to understand how an honest man can accept a position like that. In March, 1901, the "National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches," in its meetings at Cardiff, heard some plain speaking on this point from the Rev. Dr. Monro Gibson. It is true that his subject was that of Sunday-school teaching. But the principles he laid down are plainly applicable to all national schools in which the Bible is taught as a divine revelation.<sup>1</sup> And although

<sup>1</sup> The analogy between Board or "British" schools and Nonconformist Sunday-schools, so far as concerns religious instruction, is far closer than is commonly supposed. The effect of Mr. W. H.

no Board-school teacher is called upon to sign a creed or to make any profession of faith, he would not be allowed to give religious instruction if he did not assume this view of the Bible in all his lessons.<sup>1</sup> So far as the Bible is concerned, then, the words of Dr. Gibson have a clear bearing upon the position of Board-school teachers. He fully admitted that "within recent years difficulties had arisen on account of the change of view brought about in the minds of many Christians by the results, or supposed results, of recent investigations." He was quite willing to allow to Sunday-school teachers a latitude which experience shows to be impossible in Board schools. The sectarian equilibrium in the management of the latter is so exceedingly delicate that it can only be preserved by excluding from the lessons everything but what is held in common by the most conservative and orthodox sections of each evangelical denomination represented. On the other hand, liberal clergymen, like Dr. Gibson, can often secure a great deal of freedom to the teachers within their own communion. This must be remembered in applying the following observations to the case of Board schools, and accordingly the warnings must be interpreted more stringently. The italics are my own:—

They were confronted (said Dr. Gibson) with the difficult and

---

Smith's resolution of 1871 was, practically, to introduce into Board schools precisely the evangelical teaching given in common by Independents, Baptists, Wesleyans, and Presbyterians. So far was this carried that for some time the Catechism of the Evangelical Free Churches was actually adopted by the School Board for Liverpool and taught in its schools.

<sup>1</sup> The experience of Mr. F. J. Gould, the author of an excellent manual of Ethical teaching, and formerly an assistant master under the London Board, is decisive on this point.

delicate question as to what must be the attitude of our Sunday-schools towards this burning question of the day. It should be laid down as an axiom to start with that *only those who firmly believed in the divine authority of both Testaments had the right to be Sunday-school teachers at all.* (Cheers.) A man who had no message of God to declare, but only doubts of his own to ventilate, was quite out of place in the pulpit or in the chair of a teacher. Those who were themselves wandering in mist and darkness were no proper guides for others—least of all for the children. Most intelligent people, indeed, had doubts and difficulties in minor matters, so they could not expect their teachers to be all-round dogmatists, though even in the minor matters they should be careful not to parade their doubts. But if their doubts touched the great question whether God had really spoken to man and given Himself for our salvation, then must *the doubter be silent; or if he must speak, let it be under the banner of infidelity, not under the flag of Christ.* (Hear, hear.) The teacher must be honest. If a teacher believed that the Pentateuch was a composite production, he must not teach his scholars that Moses wrote it all as his own original composition. He took this as a simple illustration, which was none the worse in that it suggested the remark that a good Sunday-school teacher was likely to find something much better to do than to occupy his time with a matter which was of no spiritual value when there were so many urgent themes pressing for attention. (Cheers.) *A man must either teach what he believed or not teach at all.* (Hear, hear.) In the great majority of the lessons in the Old Testament, as well as the New, there need be no occasion whatever for raising any of these questions. One of the greatest dangers of our time was making far too much of the letter of Scripture and far too little of the spirit. What of those cases where a difficult question was sprung upon them? In that case he should consider it to be the teacher's duty to state what he considered to be the truth on the matter, but at the same time to intimate that this was a subject on which good Christians differed, and therefore it was a matter which was not essential, on which a person might think either this way or that without serious harm. It should, in fact, be treated as an open question. It was the dogmatism that did the mischief on both sides. Suppose he had the story of Eden to deal with, and had reached the record of the Fall, and a smart boy popped the question, "Was that a real serpent, teacher?" Now he maintained that, in the present state of opinion among good critics, it would be a grave fault to say either "yes" or "no." He should answer: "Some say yes, others say no; but it does not matter in the smallest degree to our great lesson of to-day which of them is right." *But some might ask: "If you leave*

*such questions open, do you not unsettle the mind of the scholar?*" His answer was that their minds ought to be unsettled on questions which were unsettled. (Hear, hear.) The settling of the mind on a question which was unsettled was most mischievous and in the highest degree dangerous for the future. Who could tell, for example, what dire mischief was done in the childhood of Professor Huxley by those who succeeded in settling in his mind that the Bible must teach science with the rigorous precision of the nineteenth century or be utterly discredited? No one could read intelligently Huxley's anti-Christian writings without seeing that his fierce antagonism to Christianity was determined by the fact that he was taught in his youth to regard as settled questions those which all intelligent Christians now treated as open or as settled in the opposite way. What had been rubbed into him from his earliest days was the mischievous dogma that, if there was a solitary inaccuracy in any reference which touched the domain of science in any of the books which made up the Bible, it was impossible to accept the Scripture as from God. If only the minds of men like Huxley and Tyndall had been unsettled on the question of the relation between science and inspiration, how different might the history of Christian thought have been in the last fifty years. He did not say they would have become Christians; that was not the result of an intellectual process, but the work of the Spirit. But they certainly would not have spent their strength in sowing broadcast the seeds of unbelief, and if they had not accepted Christ themselves they would, at all events, have looked with favour and not with deadly hostility on the truth. In guiding the steps of the young they should see to it first that they were leading them up and not down, and next that the steps were made easy to them, so that they might not stumble as they climbed.<sup>1</sup>

It must be a very prejudiced mind which would fail to recognise and respect the moral and intellectual courage shown in these words from the occupant of an orthodox pulpit. But the conclusion of the report from which the above is an extract is even more instructive:—

Professor Rendel Harris (University lecturer in Palæography at Cambridge) opened the discussion. He said he thought that Dr. Gibson was a little in danger of sailing down the channel of "no

<sup>1</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, March 14th, 1901.

meaning" between "yes" and "no." As to the serpent mentioned in the Eden story, if he were asked he should at once say that it was mythical, and should be treated as such. (Oh.) When they were dealing with the educated sense of mankind they should not hesitate to speak out bravely, and face the question, and say: "Man is older than we thought him to be at one time." He asked them to appeal from the smaller Bible to the larger Bible of nature. They learnt from Genesis that Adam sewed together fig leaves. Well, the only fact they got there was that primitive man could sew. (Laughter.) If, however, they went into Kent's Cavern at Torquay, they would find the actual needle used by primitive man. That was much more convincing than any story, and he pressed upon them the importance of studying the Bible by the light of nature, and not nature by the light of the Bible.

During Professor Harris's speech many present dissented from his views. Having exhausted his time-limit, a vote was taken whether he should continue his speech. Several delegates voted against the motion, and Professor Harris said he had no intention to break the time-rule. (Laughter.)

The Rev. P. Williams (Derby) thought that Dr. Gibson ought to have dwelt longer on some of the important points, and not have passed over them by using catch phrases. They would like to have had a definition of the "Divine authority of Scripture" and the "human element in the Bible." They knew both were there, but still they wanted the matter defined so that other people might know they were there. (Cheers.)

Dr. Gibson, in reply, said he was bound by a time-limit, and could not, of course, deal with all questions in a single paper.

Now, if in a conference of "Free Churches," with no fear of ratepayers before their eyes, and no sacred "compromise" to maintain, it is so difficult to obtain a sanction for honesty in teaching the Bible, how much harder, indeed how impossible, must it be to secure it for teachers in schools whose directors represent a carefully-schemed balance of sectarian jealousies! The only possible expedient for maintaining an unreal appearance of agreement is to adhere strictly to such explanations as are not likely to be challenged by any section of evangelical believers. A paradoxical state of things thus arises. For while the liberty of teaching

is necessarily much narrower in Board schools than in Sunday schools under the liberal influence of clergymen like Dr. Monro Gibson, the area from which the teachers are, or may be, drawn is much wider in the former schools than in the latter, and nominally there is no imposition of any creed whatever.

Is this anomaly favourable to the honesty so earnestly insisted upon in the above extract? Obviously honest and self-respecting service in Board schools under the present system is made impossible to consistent Rationalists—nay, more, it is impossible to young men trained under liberal Christian influences and encouraged to accept the results of modern research, so far as these may appear consistent with the retention of belief in revelation. Suppose a young teacher entering school life with the teaching of Professor Rendel Harris fresh in his mind, and impressed with Dr. Gibson's manly exhortation not to teach what he does not believe. There is handed to him a "syllabus" of religious instruction in which "The Life of Abraham" is mentioned as a subject. To the younger children he may teach it as a story without saying whether he thinks it historical or not. Yet he cannot but be aware that his little pupils receive it as actual fact. That it would be possible to teach it otherwise is known to him by his experience of the effect produced when he indulges them with a fairy tale such as "Little Snowdrop" or "The King of the Golden River." The children are as much interested in these stories as though he had assured them they were actual facts. Yet they know quite well that it is not so. The stories belong to that wonderland where historic criticism never intrudes.

But when he relates to them "The Life of Abraham," including the divine demand for a human sacrifice, he is aware that they receive it as a statement of solemn fact, while at the same time he does not believe that it is so.

With the higher standards, containing children from twelve to fifteen years of age, the difficulty is much more serious. Encouraged by the liberty allowed him by clergymen such as Dr. Monro Gibson, he has yielded to arguments which convince him that the records of Abraham's life in Genesis are a composite production, showing an unsuccessful attempt to piece together a consistent whole out of discordant materials. Warned against dishonesty in teaching, he cannot tell his pupils that the narrative is guaranteed by the authorship of Moses. If among his scholars a prize-winner in the examinations of the Sunday School Union asks how it is that a precisely similar incident, arising out of a falsehood about a wife, is related twice of Abraham and once of Isaac, the same king being concerned at a considerable interval of time in two of the stories, what shall this honest follower of Dr. Monro Gibson say? If he says what in his own conviction is the truth, that the confusion arises through the unskilful patching of different materials, all of which are largely, if not wholly, mythical, there will be a disturbance at the School Board, and the teacher's career will be at an end. If he prevaricates, and says that it really does not matter, that in any case the moral lesson is the same, it is very doubtful whether this would satisfy the weak brethren on the School Board; but it would certainly be fatal to the teacher's own self-respect.

These observations are not in the least invalidated

by the suggestion that the opinions adopted by the teacher are possibly incorrect. From the point of view of religious equality in the nation's schools, such a suggestion is entirely inept. The consideration of consequence is that even Christian opinion, as represented by men like Dr. Munro Gibson, has now got the length of encouraging young people not to feel guilty of mortal sin if their reading convinces them of the composite and imperfect nature of "The Life of Abraham." And yet if they act on the declaration above quoted, that "a man must either teach what he believes or not teach at all," the second alternative alone is open to them. Even though they should have the genius of a Pestalozzi or a Froebel, they are excluded from the nation's schools, except on condition of open or tacit hypocrisy. If this is not religious inequality, and inequality of a shameful and odious kind, I do not know what can deserve the name.

Readers who keep pace with the times in matters of opinion, but are unfamiliar with the working of the School Board system, may perhaps be incredulous as to the existence of such a state of things as is here described. Is not the Board-school teaching "unsectarian"? they ask. The reply is that it is only so in the sense of teaching all that the "Evangelical Free Churches" hold in common. "Is not Bible teaching confined to necessary explanations in grammar, geography, and archaeology?" No, it is not, as is clearly proved by the adoption, for a time, of the Free Church catechism by the Liverpool School Board.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is no answer to say that the answers on sacraments and church order were omitted. Of course they were. But to Nonconformists they are unimportant, compared with the body of divinity contained in the other answers.

By the Shrewsbury School Board the teaching of the Apostles' Creed was ordered, and is probably now continued. It has even been decided that this is not contrary to the Compromise. But, as this point is very important, and is also the subject of a very general misunderstanding, I will not content myself with these references, but will give more detailed evidence. In 1888 a voluminous Report was issued by the latest Royal Commissioners on Education. Among a great variety of interesting information it included an account of the religious instruction given in the elementary schools. I learn from this Report that Pulliblank's *Teachers' Handbook to the Bible* and Mr. M. F. Lloyd's *Abridged Bible Catechism* were being used in Board schools with the apparent approval of the Education Department. This fact shows what is meant by "unsectarian" teaching. Of Mr. Pulliblank's book I desire to say no more than that it assumes throughout the literal historical accuracy of the Old Testament, even of the early chapters of Genesis. Mr. Lloyd's *Catechism*, on the other hand, is an ingenious scheme to set forth the whole evangelical doctrine of the plan of salvation by contriving to furnish in the exact words of the Bible the answers to a number of leading questions. Thus, to the question, "What promise of a Saviour was made to our first parents?" the answer is, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." It is unnecessary to quote further. The assumption that the serpent-myth is actual history, that the serpent was Satan and the seed Christ, sufficiently shows how the plea of the Bible, and the Bible alone, may be made to support the

teaching under the name of unsectarian religion, beliefs abandoned by educated people and condemned by the spirit of the age. This should be borne in mind when we note the selections of Scripture made by School Boards for the teaching of children.

It appears that at the date of the Report—and I can find no evidence of any recent change—the Bible narratives of the Creation, of the Fall, of the Flood, and of Noah's exploits were considered to be specially suitable for the moral instruction of infants. They were prescribed for this purpose by the School Boards for Bolton, Manchester, Rochdale, Newport with St. Moollos, and many others. In Liverpool the book of Genesis was taken for the first year's course; but whether that included babies does not clearly appear. The School Board for London does not seem to have regarded those narratives as milk for babes, and its selections were much above the ordinary level. But in its prescription then, as now, of the "lives" of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as subjects for study, it certainly intended that they should be treated as historical, and this all teachers understand. The same remark may be made wherever a particular book or section of Scripture is prescribed by this or any other Board. Thus, under the Wanstead Board, the higher standards were set to study Joshua and Judges. It would be difficult to find in all literature two books more full of bloodshed, murder, massacre, and savagery of even more repulsive forms. I can appreciate as well as anyone the gleams of a higher life that flash from their pages here and there. And even the most shocking pictures they give of the ancient alliance between superstition and cruelty might conceivably be used by a teacher entrusted with

perfect "liberty of prophesying" to illustrate the depths out of which the evolution of reason and morality has raised us. But that is not allowed to Board-school teachers any more than to "sectarian" teachers. Indeed, the former are more tightly bound by the "Compromise." The Book says that God overthrew the walls of Jericho by a miracle, and that by his express and particular command the Israelites "utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep and ass, with the edge of the sword." Now, if any teacher were to tell his pupils that the massacre might be historical, but that the allegation of a divine command was clearly false, there would undoubtedly be trouble at the next Board meeting, and probably at many others to follow.

The same may be said of the slaughter of Achan and his family, of the murder of the five kings at Makkedah, of the assassination of Eglon, of the treachery to Sisera, and a dozen other sanguinary deeds which, in reading Joshua and Judges, children are taught to regard as excepted by divine command from ordinary rules of morality. How can any educated man or woman read these sanguinary legends with their innocent pupils without hastening to assure the children that these are no words of God? It is not a case in which silence can appease the conscience. The absence of explanation or denial confirms the disbelief in young hearts that are forming their faith for life. If the truth cannot be told, at least let such horrible narratives be banished from the schools.

In dealing with the New Testament it might be thought that the course is clearer. When we find

selections from the life of Christ, or the story of the crucifixion and the resurrection, ordered to be taught, or the Acts, or St. Paul's Epistles, it might be thought that here at least the School-Board plan of "unsectarian" instruction can meet with no difficulty. I am not so sure of that. It is notorious that what is called "the Higher Criticism" has no more spared the New Testament than the Old. Moreover, the acceptance of the results of that criticism is not confined to "Secularist" lecturers, nor even to Unitarians. We have only to glance at the list of contributors to the new *Encyclopædia Biblica*, and at the opinions they support, to see that many scholarly Churchmen have entirely abandoned the literal truth of New Testament history, together with the authenticity of several epistles. I do not urge their ecclesiastical authority as conclusive against the Bible-instruction rate. But at least it helps to refute the arrogant assumption of Nonconformist perverts and others that School-Board religion represents the views of all but an eccentric negligible group of ratepayers. The rational desire to treat the New as well as the Old Testament like any other book is now supported by clergymen of the Church of England who repudiate even a literal belief in the physical resurrection of Christ. No one with an eye for the signs of this time can doubt that these clergymen represent the theology of the future. Nevertheless, any teacher who is now of that opinion can only gain employment in a Board school on condition of playing the hypocrite. Let it be clearly understood that what I am urging is not the permission to teach such opinions in the schools, but only the exclusion of a subject of instruction which, in the present chaotic condition of belief, imposes on many

of the best candidates for the office of teacher the cruel alternative of exclusion or insincerity.

If it be asked how such a paradoxical state of things as above described can have been established in the entire absence of any authoritative "creed or formula," the explanation lies in that spiritual cowardice of Nonconformists which the late Mr. W. E. Forster was shrewd enough to discern. His boast that he "would get over the religious difficulty in a canter" may be mythical; but it no doubt well describes his contempt for the alleged objection of Dissenters to "State patronage" of religion. He knew that it was limited to the State patronage of other people's religion. He knew that they would never dare to leave the propagation of the faith among children to that voluntary zeal under the inspiration of God's spirit which they said ought to satisfy Anglican and Catholic Churches. As a matter of fact, the creed of a Board school is like the creed of a "Free Church"—the consensus undefined in words, but very rigid in substance, of the opinions of supporters. And in School Boards the indifferentism of latitudinarians, anxious only for peace at any price, was a guarantee of the "compromise" thus arrived at.

But, whatever may be the explanation, there is the fact that, however clearly a young man is marked out as a born teacher, the rejection of evangelical theology, and in particular of the supernatural theory of the Bible, excludes him not only from the avowedly denominational schools, but from those very Board schools which are supposed to realise the ideal of democratic religious equality.

V.

## MORAL EFFECT ON TEACHERS

It will be remembered that, in introducing the subject of the religious disabilities set up by School Boards, I carefully refrained from asserting that the barriers are absolutely impassable. All I alleged was that the tests implied, though not avowed, exclude Rationalists, whether Christian or non-Christian, from "honest and self-respecting service as teachers in the nation's schools." But they are, of course, not excluded from service of a different kind. As an illustration of the sort of service which latitudinarians or heretics are allowed to give, take the following extract from a letter printed in *Democracy* of February 23rd, 1901. The occasion of it was a previous letter from a Board-school teacher, complaining of the odious task of teaching what he did not believe, whereupon "Another Board School Teacher" addressed the editor thus:—

SIR,—The state of feeling disclosed by the remark of the "Board-school Teacher" anent the pressure put upon him to teach "Scripture" against his wish is, I am afraid, common to many others of that class of the community. One does lose a certain amount of self-respect in standing before a class and teaching for truth what one believes to be false. But, under somewhat similar circumstances, I ask myself: Why be honest? Why trouble at all about the matter? The Scripture lessons occupy little time, after all, and the harm done cannot amount to much. In view of the facts that all the work done in school may be described as an attempt to enable the children to conform to the canons of Christian or commercial morality (*sic*), and that no degree of conformity to those of either cult will abate the ills or conduce to

the welfare of humanity, I feel that more harm is done in the ordinary school work than in the time set apart for religious instruction. But one must get a living somehow; so I, personally, comply with the terms of my agreement with my employers, and let conscience go hang.

I will not do School Board teachers the injustice of accepting this gentleman as a fair representative of their moral tone. But my own experience, and a fairly extensive intercourse with them during many years, assures me that the first sentence in the above extract is substantially correct. The discontent, however, is caused not exactly by "the pressure put upon them to teach 'Scripture,'" but by the necessity imposed upon them to teach it in a fashion inconsistent with their own convictions. I will undertake to say that if permission to teach honestly what they believe about the Bible were given to Board school teachers, three-fourths of them, at the very least, would tell the children that the greater part of the Hexateuch must be regarded in the same light as a series of fairy tales; that the story of Jonah is a moral fable, very impressive in its way, but probably destitute of even a basis of fact; that the Book of Daniel is a romance, and that of Esther a political apologue. I believe, also, that, if they dared, the same proportion of teachers would treat nearly all the miracles of the Old Testament as originating in the imagination of Jewish patriots and poets, rather than in actual fact. Even if I put the proportion numerically too high, the most sanguine believer in the evangelical fervour inspired by our Training Colleges must surely feel that the letter above quoted is indicative of considerable mental unrest. Let the extent of Rationalism among teachers be minimised to the utmost possible degree consistent with notorious facts;

still it will remain true that a large number are forced into teaching what they do not believe.

Now, this is a sort of fact of which the moral import is not dependent on statistics. If only twenty per cent. of the men and women who stand before their classes with the Life of Abraham, or the account of the Deluge, or the story of the Exodus in their hands as the basis of moral instruction, hold these parts of the Bible to be unhistorical while they are obliged to treat them as solemn facts, it seems too like taking "a lie in their right hand" for the inculcation of truth. The misdirected satire of Jean Ingelow in ridiculing a theory of spiritual evolution which she did not understand would be much more applicable to the case of these teachers :—

" Gracious deceivers who have lifted us  
Out of the slough where passed our unknown youth ;  
Beneficent liars who have gifted us  
With sacred love of truth."

Human nature is too complex and unfathomable to allow of any sweeping affirmation of demoralising consequences in such a case. I was once asked by one of the best men I ever knew, himself an Anglican clergyman, why I did not seek orders in the Established Church. I replied that "for one reason I had never up to that moment seen any creed that I could sign." "Indeed!" he responded, "never seen the creed you could sign, hav'n't you? Well, now, I have never seen the creed I couldn't sign." Making all allowance for my friend's love of paradox, I yet could not but feel that between his notion of responsibility for assenting to a creed and mine there was an impassable difference. Yet I knew him to be in all other relations a man of

unimpeachable honour and courageously truthful. I should be very loth, therefore, to deny the possibility that analogous instances of personal paradox may be found among teachers who believe one thing and teach another. But the letter I have quoted above is sufficient proof that the position is a dangerous one.

Let it be granted that the moral degeneracy exhibited in that letter is an extreme and exceptional instance of the working of the system. Let it further be conceded that at the other end of the scale there are a number of sincere and devout Evangelical teachers whose Biblical creed is an inspiration to them. There will remain the large majority who belong neither to one class nor to the other. Pledged to no creed, possessed of culture enough to appreciate the revolution in educated opinion on the origins and authority of the Bible, they yet feel no special impulse to any independent study of such questions, and ordinary prudence warns them against any precipitancy in adopting ideas which would create a daily consciousness of discord between duty and conviction. The result is an attitude of conventional acquiescence which guards their mental comfort, but empties their Scriptural teaching of all reality. Some of the more studious among them, while shy of reading distinctly Rationalistic books, find much edification in the works of a contemporary school which suggest that after all there is nothing exactly true, and it does not much matter. Mr. A. J. Balfour's elegant disquisition on the duty of believing with the majority, or Mr. Percy Gardner's charming explanation in his *Exploratio Evangelica* of the possibility that a creed may be both true and false at the same time, have great attractions for honest men in such circumstances. Pretending

to their own consciences to adopt, though without legitimate authority or open avowal, a freedom which I have above suggested as their due if they are to teach the Bible at all, they tell the stories of the Old Testament without any pretence of discriminating fact from fiction even in their own minds. What does it matter? they ask. If they were telling the story of Jack and the Beanstalk, they would not feel it necessary to warn their infant hearers that beans do not, as a rule, produce stalks reaching up to heaven. The attitude of the child's mind towards such a narrative is, they well know, neither that of belief nor that of unbelief. It is simply that of interest and wonder at an unfolding vision. Why should the case be different with the story of Eve and the Serpent?

It is not for me to answer that question. The point of my whole argument is that, if Hebrew myth or legend is to be treated at all in State schools, they should be treated precisely in that manner. What I complain of is that they are not so treated, but rather as parts of a divine and infallible history. And the position is such that they cannot be otherwise treated, unless the children under instruction are expressly told so. This would be quite possible in Sunday-schools, even of orthodox churches, if liberal influences like those of Dr. Monro Gibson or Professor Rendel Harris happened to prevail there. But in no Board school is it at all possible, because the attempt would lead to theological discussion on the Board, and revive the religious difficulty in its most obnoxious form. The result is that teachers have to treat as solemn fact every Hebrew legend or impossible miracle read as a Scripture lesson. Those whom I have described above as receptive of modern

dissolving views, wherein historic falsehood shades off into spiritual truth, may flatter themselves that they are only giving a moral lesson through a parable. But the illusion is dissipated the moment that any intelligent pupil asks such critical questions as occur to precocious children. "Mother," asked a four-year-old *enfant terrible* whom I once knew, "what does God sit down on when he's tired?" "O, my dear," said the mother, "God is never tired." "But," retorted the child, "you said he rested on the seventh day."

Now critical questions of children are of no disadvantage whatever, if suggested by the inconsistencies of an avowed parable or fable. But any question of the kind may rudely dispel the rationalising teacher's notion, that he can use Hebrew myths as he uses Æsop's Fables without letting his pupils know it. If it be said that as a matter of fact such questions are rarely or never asked in school, so much the worse for the system. For the absence of any such sign of intelligent interest shows that the whole lesson is regarded as a ceremonial observance having no relation to realities. Besides, there are many cases in which an intelligent and rational teacher, who was really free, would anticipate such questions for the sake of the spiritual impression he is seeking to make. If, for instance, he is using the infatuated Pharaoh of the Exodus as a type of earthly power, scornful of spiritual verities, and eventually crushed by a might that it cannot understand, he must needs deny the literal truth of the assertion that "God hardened Pharaoh's heart"; or, otherwise, all modern analogies fail. To explain the arrogant contempt of George III. and his court for the new-born American patriotism, by asserting that God hardened that

monarch's heart, would not be tolerated even by literal believers of what is said about Pharaoh. It is, therefore, impossible for the teacher to make any obviously fair application of the ancient example to the modern instance.

Take, again, the alleged command given by Jahweh to Moses, Joshua, and Israel at large to smite the seven nations of old Palestine, and "utterly to destroy them," to "make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them." Either this command is accepted as historical, or it is not. In the former case the teacher has an unenviable task in "justifying the ways of God to men." In the latter case, a conscientious teacher would almost give all his hopes of preferment to be allowed to say that the statement was a false and blasphemous pretence of the Israelites. But even here the recipients of dissolving views may find an issue. It may not be true that any personal Deity gave such a command. Yet the doctrine of the gradual selection of higher races through the survival of the fittest in each generation's struggle for life is in one form or another generally accepted; and, probably, the application of such a doctrine to the resettlement of ancient Palestine would not stir up "the religious difficulty" even on School Boards. But such an interpretation is estopped by the conditions under which the lesson is given. The "compromise" involves a tacit undertaking to assume, if not the infallibility, at least the historical accuracy of the Bible, especially where it narrates the successive steps in the progress of the alleged revelation to which all the compromising sects are at least officially committed. One of those steps is the establishment of the chosen people in Palestine, and the suppression of

the earlier inhabitants by order of a personal divine ruler in order to make room for them. This divine Ruler speaks with human speech, expresses emotions of anger and jealousy indistinguishable from human feeling. He issues orders like an earthly sovereign who has a policy of conquest to carry out. It is not Fate, or the Unknowable, who is here acting and speaking. It is an intensely personal Being, whose mercy elsewhere is said to endure for ever, and whose "compassions fail not." How is it possible for any honest Christian, with the words of Jesus murmuring in his heart, to tell children that such a Being ordered these massacres? Yet no Board schoolmaster would be supported by his Board in treating as fictitious the terrible command above-mentioned.

What reality can there be in the teaching of the Bible under such limitations by any man or woman touched by the spirit of the age? The possibility of simplicity and straightforwardness is confined to that small minority of teachers who still hold the whole Bible to be literally true. Unconscious of any incongruity between modern thought and the "plan of salvation" taught to them in their childhood, they are also untroubled by any inconsistency between Old Testament fables and the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount. They tell, with such fervour as a cooling faith allows, of man's first disobedience, of the curse thereby entailed on all posterity, and of the elaborate process of miracle and prophecy, of type and sacrifice, of commandments and law and ceremony, by which a divine Being laboriously prepared the coming of the sacred victim, whose death and resurrection opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers. Such a course of instruction amidst all the array of theological

dreams it unfolds has, undoubtedly, lucid intervals in which moving appeals may be made to the heart. The loss of Eden, the passion of Cain, the aspirations of Enoch, the faith of Abraham, the story of Joseph, David's heart-broken sorrow for Absalom—all, even when taken literally, give the opportunity of contrasting the meanness of self-will with loyalty of soul to a divine ideal. But the possibility of this does not in the least palliate the wrong spoken of in previous pages, the injustice done to dissenting rate-payers and less orthodox teachers who object to do evil that good may come. They protest against being made aiders and abettors in the perpetuation of what they think falsehood, even though some moral truths may occasionally glimmer through it.

But outside the small minority, who can with their whole hearts "teach the Bible" in the sense intended by "the compromise," teachers are exposed to various degrees of strain varying from the abject surrender to hypocrisy quoted above, to casuistical ingenuities and non-natural interpretation of obvious duty. "Obvious duty" because neither by authority of ratepayers, nor by orders of a School Board, nor even at the request of parents, is any man justified in teaching to his pupils as truth what he himself believes to be a lie. "Parable," "allegory," "fable," and such like, are not the words to describe the method of one who teaches in one sense and takes care that the children shall understand him in another. To talk about a dispensation of "illusion" is all very well when we are groping after an increasing purpose running through the ages of faith. In those times everyone believed the illusion, and there was no dishonesty. But when a man tells of a universal

deluge, or of the overthrow of Jericho's walls by sound of trumpet, or of Joshua's arrest of the sun, in such a manner as to make the impression that he believes them as facts when he does not believe them, this is not an economy of illusion; it is a lie—or at least it would be so to any unsophisticated conscience.

## VI.

### THE EFFECT ON SCHOOL CHILDREN

SECTARIANISM has always professed to take a purer and warmer-hearted interest than the so-called "Secularists" in the moral and spiritual welfare of school children. In 1870 it was openly said that schools without the Bible would tend to make their pupils merely "clever devils," whereas the daily inculcation of Holy Scripture would make them "wise unto salvation." At the risk of needless reiteration; I must again disclaim any inclination to deny the educational value of the Bible if properly used. The question here raised is, whether the Bible as taught under the conditions already described is calculated to secure salvation from falsehood, insincerity, and formalism? But these vices freeze out the life of moral instruction, and paralyse all efforts to achieve any salvation worth the name. After thirty years of daily text-grinding in the people's schools, or rather after a hundred years of it if we take into consideration the previous work of voluntary associations, the question of Browning's Pope seems very pertinent:—

" Well, is the thing we see salvation ? "

Is the language in our streets much purer or less profane and coarse than it was in 1870?

More than one local Council, in disgust at the coarse, foul, and disgusting words constantly used in its streets, has desired the law to be strengthened.

We have had practically universal and professedly compulsory education for more than thirty years—or at least four generations of school children—and yet we have to ask the magistrates to supplement the moral work of the schoolmaster in a matter like this. The following paragraph from the *Westminster Gazette*, of September 6th, 1901, is very suggestive. The italics are my own :—

“ We would gladly see the resolution passed by the East Ham Council to stop offensive language on tram-cars adopted by other local authorities. The use of language of this sort is disagreeable enough to many, wherever heard ; it is particularly so on public conveyances where other passengers are compelled to listen to it. *The strange thing is that those who indulge in it are, as a rule, quite unconscious of giving any cause of offence. They are so accustomed among their fellows to express themselves in such a way that they go on doing so wherever they may be.* It will, no doubt, be possible to curb the nuisance by measures of the kind referred to ; but, as the use of objectionable language anywhere is an offence at law, it might be well, perhaps, if the law were put in motion more frequently than it is. Persons passing along the streets often have their ears assailed with foul expressions, which a few prosecutions might make less common.”

Is it not a scandal that elementary schools should be so powerless to mould the manners of children who have attended them for six, eight, or ten years ? All these foul-mouthed people, who “ are so accustomed among their fellows to express themselves in such a way,” have passed through some elementary school in which the Bible, or even the Catechism, has been taught, and “ explanations have been given therefrom in the principles of the Christian religion and morality.” And yet they have not been saved from coarseness, profanity, and indecency in speech.

Is the effect of cheap literature quite what we hoped and expected ? When opening our first Board schools, did we forebode that in the twentieth century the cry of

"All the winners" would sell more papers than the most thrilling announcements of scientific or archaeological discovery? In our incessant whining for clumsy methods of force to put down betting, bribery, and impurity is there not a manifest despair of moral remedies? The other day certain local newspapers reported penalties most justly inflicted at a police court on two Sunday-school teachers, convicted of wilful damage in a park courteously thrown open to excursionists by the Duke of Westminster. The case was brought before the magistrates only because incessant repetitions of the same sort of offence left no alternative but prosecution or exclusion of the public. It is some twenty-five years since Bradgate Park, in Leicestershire, had to be at least temporarily closed for a similar reason. But in the interval there does not seem to have been such improvement in popular manners as ought to have been effected if increased school attendance meant more general moral inspiration.<sup>1</sup> I gladly acknowledge that juvenile crime, in the sense of offences punished by sentence of magistrates or judges, has largely diminished. But this has been brought about by improvements in the law rather than in juvenile manners. Children who would, in a more barbarous though recent age, have been sent to prison are now sent to Industrial schools or Reformatories. That, however, is quite consistent with a persistently low standard of juvenile morality, and of this there is too much evidence.

<sup>1</sup> While revising these pages for the press I note in the *Manchester Guardian*, of August 19, 1901, that the closing of Plas Newydd, in Llangollen, is attributed to the behaviour of "trippers"; and that the ruins of Castell Dinas Bran will probably have to be shut up from the same cause.

It may be said that our failure to improve morals as fast as we increase knowledge condemns the churches as well as the schools. That is so. But in regard to the possibilities of amendment in the two cases there is this difference. The churches are much more free than the schools are to adapt their moral teaching to the needs of the time. Articles scheduled in an Act of Parliament, and even Trust Deeds deposited in a denominational Muniment Room, are no more effective than the handcuffs and bonds imposed on professors of the "box-trick," where there is the will to get rid of them. But the watchful jealousy of a School Board majority, elected for the purpose of guarding the sacred compromise, is not to be eluded. As a matter of fact, it is notorious that the churches are to a very considerable extent changing their methods of teaching. I have already given illustrations of the freer spirit which is gradually inspiring even Evangelical Sunday-schools. We may well hope, therefore, that in accordance with historic precedent the churches will insensibly shift the standard of orthodoxy. And, meantime, there is little temptation to insincerity. Whatever may be the case with ministers—among whom there is a great deal more moral heroism than is commonly supposed—Sunday-school teachers, at any rate, have no temptation to continue their work of Bible teaching for a single day after they find out that they cannot do so honestly. Besides, Sunday-schools do not compel us to pay rates for their support. They have no national or municipal authority at their back. They do not involve us as citizens in responsibility for their teaching or moral influence. Whatever may be said about the lingering fiction of a "national"

church, its Sunday-schools are entirely voluntary and unofficial.

The case of public elementary day schools is very different. Attendance at one or other of them is compulsory on some 84 per cent. of our children. We are forced to pay for their support through taxes and rates. It is by the national or municipal authority, or both, that every lesson in them is given. We are, therefore, responsible for them; and if they are allowed to demoralise the commonwealth of the future, it is our fault. Or, if they are maintained on a system proved to be inefficient in attaining the highest ends of education, every citizen is to blame. Further, the position of the elementary teacher is a much more difficult one than that of the Sunday-school teacher. To the former his work is also his livelihood. He cannot abandon it with a light heart the moment he is required to offend his conscience. Nor is there the slightest prospect at present of obtaining for him an honourable "liberty of prophesying." This would imperil that sacred ark of the covenant, "the compromise."

The result is that the Bible teaching in Public, Elementary, and especially in Board schools, is inevitably more demoralising than that of Sunday-schools. In the latter the worst evil to be feared is that of ignorance, or, perhaps, honest bigotry. But in the former the tendency of the system is to make dishonesty a necessity of life. Or if dishonesty be, considering all things, too harsh a word to use, the least evil that is possible is the prevalence of a lifeless formalism in precisely that part of school teaching which most of all requires the energy of an eternal spirit.

Only use and wont can account for the indifference with which the majority of School Board electors look on while the springs of morality are poisoned before their eyes. What does it matter? ask some. If the teaching is false, it means as little to the children as the drone of a beetle, and meantime the religious difficulty is avoided. It seems never to occur to such people that they are thus consenting parties to the waste of nearly one-fifth of a child's school time. How can such a system be anything but demoralising? Even the children from decent and respectable homes want waking up on moral subjects. Let it be granted that such children hear nothing but good at home. They hear it, however, in the form of kindly platitudes about "behaving" and doing as they are told, and honesty as the best policy—which platitudes are neither stimulative nor impressive. They require to be made to feel that the matter of conduct is interesting; and they will never be made to feel that by a teacher who explains the grammar and geography and archaeology of a Bible story which he does not himself believe. The fate of those children—alas, too many—who have no decent homes to echo the platitudes of morality is far worse. It is simply shocking to hear little victims of society's crimes rattling off pious phrases and shrieking saintly hymns to which they obviously attach no meaning whatever. And if their teacher is compelled by his engagements to add to the falsehoods and unrealities of their young lives a lesson on a supernatural revelation which he does not himself believe, he becomes, like the parent, to Christ inconceivable, who, instead of a fish, would give to his child a scorpion.

Perhaps one reason for persistence in the present

system is that its most devout supporters do not regard morality as teachable, but expect it rather to be inspired by a miracle of divine grace. The instrument for the accomplishment of this *opus operatum* is the word of God, and the word of God is identified with the Bible. A magic charm is thought to lie in the syllables of the sacred text, like the influence once attributed to written spells—a charm altogether apart from any significance of the words. The same fond delusion which induces some well-meaning people to hang up texts in railway waiting rooms, or to employ sandwich-men to carry texts on their backs, is also at the root of much zeal for text-grinding in schools. If the Genesis story of the Fall of Man, or of the Flood, had been first given to the modern world by some learned excavator of cuneiform records, we should certainly have considered it extremely interesting, and in many ways suggestive of the attitude of early ages towards the mystery of life. As fables they might even have been recognised as useful for combining entertainment with instruction in the teaching of children. But no one would have dreamed of making them a formal basis of moral lessons. What is it, then, which gives such narratives their sacred and even awful importance? It is the feeling that they are parts of a divine "plan of salvation" which must stand or fall as a whole, and of which every separate part is essential to the miraculous power of the whole. The logical significance is not the point of importance, but rather the impact of a divine word.

Now there is certainly a grain of truth in the religious assumption that morality is not teachable in the same way as, for instance, arithmetic is teachable. When, in the latter case, the main relations of the

digit numbers are fixed in the memory, the rest is mere matter of combination, requiring only attention. But no amount of memory work or of combination of maxims will give morality. Here the working of the sympathies and the will are absolutely essential. How is this to be ensured ? The Evangelical people who are the lifeguard of the School Board system hold that it depends on a miracle of grace, and a miraculous Bible is, in their view, the best, indeed the only means for evoking that. Now, I am not going to assert that, as regards this miracle of grace, they are fundamentally wrong. At any rate, I hold they are not so wrong as those who treat of human nature as though it were wholly and utterly isolated from and independent of the divine Whole in which it lives and moves and has its being. But this expectation of grace from the mere repetition of sacred spells is unworthy of the spiritual aspirations with which it is too often associated.

No ; grace comes through human intercourse, and the more vivid, the more intimate, the more natural that intercourse is, the more probable is the transmission of grace. Apply this to teacher and pupils. The former is rightly expected to be the medium of a grace that touches the sympathies and moulds the wills of his pupils. But he can only discharge this function through free intercourse of mind and heart. How is that possible to him in the course of lessons which require him to pretend a mental attitude wholly alien to his real life ? It is of no use to say that it ought not to be alien to his real life, or that he ought to be a sincere believer. There is nothing whatever in the engagement of a Board-school teacher to bind him to that, and, even if there were, the ideas of the

most sincere "believers" about the Bible are now very often indeed identical with those held by eminent unbelievers fifty years ago. But the Board-school system, the eternal "compromise," makes no allowance for this change. And the result is that really only a minority—and, I suspect, a very small minority—of such teachers feel entirely at ease and natural in giving a Scripture lesson.

How can a teacher, touched by the spirit of the age, feel at ease in teaching the life of Jesus to his class? He has, perhaps, been reading with sympathy and irresistible conviction the article "Gospels" in the new *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, a work edited and largely written by eminent clergymen of the Church of England. He finds that in the judgment of the writers of this particular article—a judgment founded on evidence he cannot resist—the Gospels are a growth, rather than the work of the men whose names they bear. For the reality of the miraculous events, including the resurrection, there seems to him now to be no evidence whatever of the nature usually demanded by modern historical science. And, indeed, nothing is left to him but a vision of transcendent beauty floating between earth and heaven, too pure for material solidity, and yet impossible of invention by any such minds as are reflected in the New Testament canon. The result probably is that he still keeps and still worships the Vision, as a transfiguration of a supreme manhood too great to be understood or rightly reported by disciples.

I am not writing a polemic nor yet an eirenicon. I am not, therefore, called upon to defend such a mental attitude as is here described. I only say that, in these times, it is one very natural to many who desire to

keep both reason and emotion true. And those who go through this experience, if they have the teaching faculty, are likely to be specially quickened by that experience. The very anxieties and "searchings of heart" they have suffered make them more sympathetic, and the spiritual heroism which prompts them to refuse the consolations of pretence gives a ring of sincerity to their utterance that tells upon children no less than on adults. But imagine such a man or woman set to give a lesson, according to the "compromise," on the alleged birth in Bethlehem, or the feeding of the five thousand, or the walking on the sea! He must treat such things as historic facts, and is afraid lest by any chance word he should betray his real position. He must expound the "fulfilments of prophecy" asserted by Matthew or Luke. He can hardly help giving travellers' tales of the Bethlehem cave which he regards as an imposture. If questioned on the precise mode of multiplication of the baked bread and cooked fishes that fed the five thousand, he can only reply feebly that these things are a mystery, when he holds them to be fiction. The great immeasurable soul of whom he has glimpses through the transfiguration wrought by the Gospels is reduced in his inevitable teaching to an itinerant wonder-monger, who puzzled the world by a sort of holy magic. Is it strange that religion, taught after such a fashion, should be morally barren?

It may be asked how would the position be improved by excluding the Bible? One answer is that the moral atmosphere in many schools would be purified by the elimination of unreality and insincerity. That such evils accompany the use of the Bible in school is not the fault of the book. It is a consequence of

the conventional superstition with which it is treated. But, so long as half the population regard it as divine and infallible, while the other half believe it to be a collection of human documents, each to be taken on its merits, it is impossible to ensure sincerity and honesty in its use. If ever a time comes when it can be used with the same sort of intelligent discrimination and freedom as is claimed by university Professors in teaching Cicero's *De Officiis* or Plato's *Republic*, it will become an exceedingly valuable handbook. But that time does not seem to be within a measurable distance now.

Another answer to the above question is that, if morality were taught as a part of our natural life dependent on human experience, and not on a miraculous revelation, the teacher would be more likely to bring his lessons home to the every-day life of his pupils. Which is the more likely to inspire a wholesome fear of lying—the story of Gehazi, or the account of a plague of small-pox which might have been stopped by the isolation of the first cases but for the lying denials of their relatives that there was anything wrong? In my time it was usual to tell children that "Don't-care" met a lion, and was eaten up. The warning had not much influence; but the true story of a child who walked unwarily, and fell headlong down a flight of steps, induced, at any rate for a short time, some alertness in looking to the path before us.

It is no aspersion on the Bible to say that it cannot supply the place of systematic instruction in the morals of daily life. Listening to the "explanations given therefrom in the Christian religion and morality" by even the best elementary teachers, one cannot but

feel that the knowledge of Scripture is one thing and morality another. Both teacher and taught are for the moment affecting to live in another world entirely different from this, conducted on a different method, actuated by impossible motives, and continually corrected by miracle. The stories, the maxims, the doctrines, are items to be remembered for examinations. But they are none of them on the same plane as the child's daily life. The notion of any practical application rarely occurs, except as a preparation for death or a key to the dream-world of heaven.

In former years, when I was still a member of the School Board for London, and much nearer in creed to the Evangelical Free Churches than I am now, I was so impressed with the practical absence of systematic moral teaching from the schools that I called attention to the subject, and obtained the appointment of a small Committee to consider the question. One of the members was the late Rev. John Rodgers, Vicar of St. Thomas', Charterhouse, and at that time Vice-Chairman of the Board. My proposal was that a course of lessons should be based upon the summary of practical morality given by the Church Catechism in answer to the question, "What is thy duty towards thy neighbour?" I thought then, as I do still, that the summary is a very good one.<sup>1</sup>

The highest classes in elementary schools are perhaps capable of receiving more definite instruction

<sup>1</sup> Among those who never learned this catechism a very curious mistake is prevalent. It is supposed to urge contentment with "that state of life unto which it *has pleased* God to call" us, whereas, of course, the words are, "to which it *shall please* God to call me." Also the word "betters" has been quite gratuitously taken to refer exclusively to social rank, whereas it refers just as naturally to moral worth.

on the origin, nature, and obligations of social relationships. But for children from seven to twelve years of age it contains just the sort of practical summary of duty, in the form of a "categorical imperative," that is adapted to their needs. Drawn out into a series of detailed lessons with ample illustrations, it would form an admirable basis for a course of moral instruction and exhortation likely to affect the life. In this conviction I went so far as to sketch the outline of such a course of lessons, which, I suppose, exists still somewhere in the archives of the Board. And, as it was grounded on the Catechism, I thought myself secure of support from Evangelical Churchmen. I am glad to remember that the Rev. John Rodgers supported me. But I was sadly disappointed in the more pronounced Evangelical laymen. One of them, a most excellent man, so far as that is possible to a member of a "straitest sect," and elected to the Board entirely on account of his religiousness, declared vehemently that "it left out everything that a Churchman cared for." It was useless to suggest that "everything a Churchman cared for" could be supplied in a Churchman's own Sunday schools. The very appearance of teaching morality for its own sake, apart from the magic, symbols, and formulas of theology, was considered suspicious, and the project had to be dropped.

The decision was regrettable; but, from the point of view fixed by the "compromise," it was perhaps inevitable. For both Churchmen and Nonconformists, having once established and endowed the Bible—and practically their common interpretation of the Bible—as the one sanction of morality recognised by the School Board, were naturally loth to imperil that

settlement by any admission of merely natural ethics. But, however that may be, surely the recent refusal of the same Board to allow children to be withdrawn in accordance with the Conscience Clause from Biblical instruction to receive moral lessons instead is indefensible. The facts are as follows.

A society known as the Moral Instruction League was formed some time ago to stimulate attention to moral teaching in schools, and to suggest what the members held to be better methods. Using a right which is presumably within the limits of the British Constitution, to influence their fellow-citizens by conversation, they visited the homes of parents having children in attendance at Board schools, and explained their ideas. They showed that by law the children could not be compelled to receive the regulation Bible teaching. They pointed to the article in the School Board Code which directs that "during the time of religious teaching or religious observance any children withdrawn from such teaching or observance shall receive separate instruction in secular subjects." They then suggested that the parents, if they preferred non-theological moral teaching, should withdraw their children from the Bible lessons, and at the same time request that they should, during the time of those lessons, receive separate teaching in morality. The suggestions were received by the parents with an unexpected amount of favour. As many as a hundred children, or more, were withdrawn from theological teaching in each of several schools. But so threatening a schism was met with prompt measures by the alarmed devotees of the compromise. In the first place, separate moral instruction was refused to the children withdrawn. Instead of that, they were set

to toil apart at ordinary school drudgery. Now, this appears to be a rather hard, and even cruel, interpretation of the School Board rule ; for it virtually refuses to recognise ethics as a "secular subject," and it forces upon unwilling parents the alternative of Bible or nothing. Under such circumstances, it is easy to understand the success of the next step taken by zealots for the compromise. The parents were visited in their homes, and the difficulty and unpleasantness of the situation created for their children were vigorously explained. The result has been, I believe, hitherto that the children returned to the Bible lessons ; and this will probably be adduced as evidence of the unanimous desire of parents of all creeds and none to have their children taught the common faith of Evangelical Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Independents.

It would have been more generous, and equally in accord with the School Board regulations, if the Board had consented to regard natural ethics as a "secular subject," and detailed teachers—who could easily have been found—to give the lessons to the children for whom they were asked. The refusal to do so suggests that the authorities were afraid of the experiment. Perhaps, like the authorities of Jewish orthodoxy at the first feeble beginnings of Christianity, "they doubted whereunto this would grow." But, after all, they are ministers of law, not of their own theological views ; and I cannot for a moment suppose that their legal advisers would have told them that a concession to these parents would be contrary to the law. There are some, especially among the clergy, who boldly maintain the right of every parent to have his children taught his own creed at the public expense. It is

noteworthy that these extremists belong to a Church which formerly resisted fiercely the imposition of a conscience clause, and which also refused to believe that any schools were necessary except her own. But, though the new view of the priesthood is certainly more Christian than their former opinions, it has the misfortune to be impracticable. Our sects are too many to allow this sort of liberality. But if ever there was a case in which parents were justified in asking to have their own views of moral instruction carried out, it is surely the case I have described. They did not want any eccentricities of morality to be taught. They would probably have been quite satisfied with the practical principles of conduct set forth in the Church Catechism, as above quoted. If Bible teaching can claim to be "unsectarian," how much more justly can the title be claimed for doctrines of morality from which not one in a million of the population would dissent! The refusal of their request was unreasonable, unjust, and ungenerous. That it would be sustained by a majority of electors zealous for the Bible even to persecution may, unhappily, be true. But it was not in the true interest of morality. It is of a piece with the policy which sets unbelievers to teach belief, and counts the conscience and heart of the teacher nothing so long as he speaks by the Book.

## VII.

### THE WRONG TO THE NATION

SECOND in importance to the disastrous effects of a hollow compromise on the teaching of morality is its injurious influence on the development of national education. In the United States and in our own greatest colonies there has been an almost complete elimination of the religious question. It is true that in the older settlements of Canada friction is kept up by the survival of Catholic claims and influence. It is true also that in the United States and in Australia occasional efforts have been made by devout sectaries to disturb the settlement effected by dropping theology. We know likewise that in many common schools of the United States the old custom is still kept up of reading from the teacher's desk at the commencement of school a few verses from the Bible "without note or comment." I am one of those who think that this comment of silence is worse than almost any other. The custom is a tribute to the survival of Puritan traditions in America. But the fact that, in spite of these traditions, the Americans have substantially left the teaching of the Bible and Christianity to the Churches is all the more creditable to their spiritual courage. At any rate, their practice affords no support whatever to the evangelical compromise in England. But these modifications of pure "secularism" have been almost a negligible

quantity. It is substantially—and excluding Catholic Canada—almost exactly true that the educational policy of Greater Anglo-Saxondom has been determined solely by educational interests, and not by sectarian rivalry. I recognise, of course, that other advantages besides this blessed peace have favoured our kinsmen beyond the seas, and especially in the United States. The absence of an Established Church, and the system of Common Schools, which merges all class interests in the one national and patriotic interest, have, of course, conduced to the same end. But even these happy features of the new commonwealths would have been ineffectual if the religious difficulty had not been excluded.

These commonwealths have not had to balance the claims of jealous sects. They have not had to repress the enterprise of heterodox school managers lest they should attract more scholars than the orthodox. They have not been tempted to minimise the number of school places needed in a district lest they should disturb sectarian monopolists who could not raise the money for enlargement. They have been privileged to consider two questions only: how many children required education, and what were the best methods of intellectual and moral culture. Whatever criticisms may be passed by our old-world scholars on the rawness of American culture, witnesses of indisputable competence—as for instance, the correspondents commissioned to gather information for the *Times* newspaper on American machine manufacture—are emphatic in their testimony that the commercial and scientific progress of the States is very largely owing to the facilities for education offered from the Common Schools upwards. No ecclesiastical traditions, no balancing

of sect against sect, not even "pious founders," have stood between the people and their intellectual aspirations. And this is not in the least because the American people are less bigoted than we. So far as we can judge, the puritanical traditions of the Pilgrim Fathers still exercise a widespread and enduring influence on American religion. But, whatever may be their various beliefs, they drop them at the school door, and ignore them in their educational counsels.

How different has been our experience in the old country! In 1807 the then Archbishop of Canterbury stamped out Mr. Samuel Whitbread's precocious scheme of national education with a pious appeal to prejudice, pleading for Christianity in the words of a heathen poet:—

"Hac casti maneant in relligione nepotes."

From that day to this the decisive consideration in every education crisis has been not how to give our children the best possible training, but how to protect first the Established Church, and next the Bible. If the Nonconformists had not been false to their professed principles in 1870, a great part of the nation might then have adopted a wider policy which must ultimately have attracted the whole people. But at the golden opportunity their spiritual courage failed them. They dared not trust religion to the "voluntary principle" which they had invoked against the Established Church. They accepted State patronage and control for religion in the schools. Since that great betrayal every School Board election has been a theological battle. Questions of education have been quite secondary. How many candidates have given an hour during their canvas to the best methods of teaching to read, or the most interesting

modes of presenting the problems of arithmetic? The retention of the Bible, and the interpretation of "unsectarianism," or rather "intersectarianism," so as to include all evangelical doctrine, have been the two notes to which every platform has echoed.

In the battle of progress it is always good to fix upon some definite assertion of principle to be maintained at all costs. Supposing that principle to be chosen, as a successful general selects his point of attack, because it commands the field, victory on that point means a good deal more than the achievement of one item in a political programme. The success leavens the national mind with a new temper that suggests consequential steps of further advance. When Cobden and his associates in the Anti-Corn Law League fixed on the bread tax as their objective point of attack they were wise in their generation. The movement was the more speedily successful because concentrated on the least defensible position of Protectionists. But when once that point was yielded the whole case for Protection in general was practically given away; and the doctrine of customs dues for revenue alone was triumphant.

In 1870 the Nonconformists had it in their power to do for the emancipation of education what Cobden and Bright accomplished for freedom of trade in 1846. Their experience since the beginning of the nineteenth century might have taught them that sectarian domination, or sectarian rivalry, was hopelessly irreconcileable with freedom of educational development. Common sense dictated that the only effective way of removing the obstacle was to eliminate theology entirely from public elementary schools, and to relegate it to the free action of the churches in accordance

with the principles up to that date held by Nonconformists. The notion of any danger to religion from such a policy ought to have been dissipated by the splendid examples of the United States, Australia, and New Zealand. So obvious seemed the inference from such palpable facts that Mr. Gladstone himself anticipated a Nonconformist demand for a "secular" system.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately he gave them credit for more faith in their own principles than they possessed. But if they had been courageous enough for consistency, tens of thousands of the generation then coming into the world would have been saved from the sectarian curse which has since blighted their education.

Let us observe what would have been gained by the exclusion of theology. In the first place there would have been a clear and definite assertion of religious equality in the schools. Where education is carried on under State patronage and control there are only two alternative methods of maintaining religious equality in the schools. The one is to teach every creed, and the other is to teach none. In a country where a very few great denominations hold the field, as in Germany<sup>2</sup> or Austria, the former plan is possible,

<sup>1</sup> He said so at a gathering of Nonconformist ministers at the house of the late Rev. Dr. Allon, when Mr. Forster's Bill was a subject of conversation. And his own feeling on the subject was more publicly shown when he characterised School-board religion as a "monstrosity." Authoritative denominational instruction he of course valued. But in schools where this was impossible he thought that limitation of the teaching to secular instruction was logically inevitable.

<sup>2</sup> We are sometimes pointed to the free, unhindered development of education in Germany as a proof of at least the harmlessness of a denominational system. But between Germany and England there are very pregnant differences which make any parallel impossible. Speaking generally, religious belief is not so much a matter of individual conviction among average Germans as with us. Not that they are less religious in sentiment. Possibly they are even more so.

or at least plausible, though even in such cases there are fragmentary sects who suffer wrong. "*De minimis non curat lex.*" In Scotland, also, practically the same system is possible, for Presbyterianism of one form or another is professed by nearly the whole population. In Ireland the bad traditions of Protestant supremacy have survived disestablishment; and education remains a battle-field. The attempt to teach the creeds of all is never satisfactory, even under the most favourable circumstances. But those cases in which it seems to be compatible with unrestricted freedom of educational development are explained by the fact that there is no desire for religious equality and no intersectorian jealousy—at least so far as the schools are concerned. They are cases of denominational supremacy by consent. Wrong is, of course, done to small minorities; but the champions of different creeds do not fight each other over the starved minds and souls of children. In England, however, the attempt to teach the creeds of all is obviously hopeless. And those Englands beyond sea which have inherited the conscientious sectarianism of the Motherland have wisely adopted the other alternative and teach the creed of none. Let us note the

because of their conventional indifference about creeds. But they have not generally that idea of the duty of individual conviction which generates our innumerable sects. Their confirmations and first communions are very much a matter of social routine like the "coming out" of girls, or the assumption of the modern substitute for the *toga virilis* by boys. To such a state of feeling rate-supported catechism and scripture are of no consequence, and this indifference makes sectarianism powerless for harm to the schools. Bismarck had some trouble with Catholic obscurantists; but he gave them short shrift. Who ever heard of a German district being stinted of school places to soothe the jealousy of the Reformed or the Evangelical Church, or of a school generation being allowed to grow up in ignorance in order that the Catholics might have time to supply the needed school places?

consequences of our perverse attempt at an impossibility.

Although the so-called "compromise"<sup>1</sup> was devised and carried by a Churchman, he was what in the vulgar language of controversy is called a "Low Evangelical," and, though one of the excellent of the earth, he would be considered in ecclesiastical circles as little better than a Dissenter. His evident desire to have evangelical Sunday-school teaching introduced into Board schools appealed to the weak brethren among Nonconformists. They thus gained the doubtful advantage of endowment for their common gospel. But they inflicted a grievance on Churchmen which it is impossible to explain away. For the genuine Anglican view of Christianity differs from the united Nonconformist view. And it differs from it in such a way that if you teach the Nonconformist view you necessarily prejudice the pupils against the Church view, although you may say nothing about it. Nonconformists are content with the Bible, and the Bible alone. Churchmen desire, also, the catechism authorised by their Church. Nonconformists are satisfied if such explanations of Scripture are given as will set forth "the plan of salvation," meaning thereby the evangelical view of the Fall, the types of Christ in Jewish history and ritual, the Incarnation, the Atonement, and justification by faith. Churchmen, on the other hand, attach great importance to the creeds and sacraments, and are naturally jealous of any School Board teaching which tends to represent the former

<sup>1</sup> The resolution of the late Mr. W. H. Smith was adopted with slight modifications by so many School Boards that the case of London is typical of all.

as sufficient without the latter. That this is actually the tendency of School-Board religion can hardly with fairness be denied.

I think, then, that Churchmen had, and still have, a grievance under the School Board system. But the policy they have pursued to secure its removal or diminution has been a blight on the education of the country. They have resisted the building of Board schools that were urgently needed. They have insisted on keeping children in crowded and stifling rooms rather than share with a Board the work of supplying education. They have stigmatised as "unfair competition" the endeavour of School Boards to spend their larger resources on giving the children of ratepayers a higher education than the sects could give them. They resisted low fees and still more free schools as long as they could, and when their opposition was bought out by the fee grant they managed to retain a power of exacting special fees in addition and railed against every attempt of School Boards to rid education of such vexatious hindrances.

Their influence with Parliament is enormous, and must continue to be so while the choice of electors is practically limited to a small class of moneyed men naturally susceptible to social glamour. Indeed, that influence is resistless except during the brief moments when what Edward Miall used to call "some great blazing principle" concentrates popular attention. Such a principle was victorious when Church rates were abolished, and when the Protestant Episcopal Church in Ireland was disestablished. Such a principle might have been found in a real religious equality for the schools. But the endowment of the united evangelical sects provided nothing of the kind. It

made all Nonconformist appeals to justice hollow and feeble, while it put a weapon into the hands of Church men which they would not otherwise have possessed. The result has been a course of reactionary legislation, the purpose of which has been to restore ecclesiastical control, while its inevitable effect has been to obstruct and blight educational progress.

Lord Sandon's Act of 1876 was very plausible in its creation of school attendance committees, and in its abolition of the 25th clause of Mr. Forster's Act, which had allowed School Boards to pay fees for children in sectarian schools. But the substitution of payment of such fees by the Guardians out of the poor rate for payment by School Boards out of the school rate showed Lord Sandon's estimate of the Nonconformist conscience. The thing remained, but the name was changed, and that was enough. In its creation of the school attendance committees, in its repeal of the 97th clause of Mr. Forster's Act,<sup>1</sup> in its specious grant to destitute districts, in its provision for the dissolution of School Boards, and in its creation of those very doubtful institutions, "day industrial schools,"<sup>2</sup> it was a reactionary and dangerous measure.

<sup>1</sup> Requiring that the fees *plus* voluntary subscriptions should equal the Parliamentary grant in the case of denominational schools.

<sup>2</sup> Doubtful, because every child, unless disqualified by mental or bodily disease, or proved to be under influences inevitably tending to crime, has a right to a place in the common schools of the nation. And the excepted classes require a sort of day and night supervision which day industrial schools cannot supply. The proper discipline for dirty and neglected children is not to herd them with other dirty and neglected children, but to get them to come clean among clean children. The experience of the School Board for London has shown that this can be done. The wretched little scarecrows haunting the streets of my native city, where day industrial schools were thought a grand discovery, is a lesson on the other side. The late Benjamin Lueraft, in his venerable age, strenuously resisted the adoption of the

But this was only the first step of reaction. The Education Department, now the Board of Education, taking advantage of the facilities offered by successive Tory Parliaments for enlarging sectarian privilege under the Code, have abolished the "17s. 6d. limit," and offered such other advantages to denominational schools that they can now be carried on with very slight voluntary subscriptions, or even with none at all. The advances made by School Boards towards a higher education have been viewed by "the powers that be" with suspicion and dislike. The Cockerton Judgment was, of course, an impartial pronouncement of law. But the manner in which the emergency thus created has been met by the Government is a clear revelation of the envy and hatred with which a too democratic education is regarded by ecclesiastically-minded statesmen. School Boards are humiliated because they have done their work too well. The permanent mutilation of their powers now threatened will create an arbitrary break in the final stage of the only education possible to Board School pupils. Parents are often quite willing to keep a boy of fourteen a year longer at the school which he has been attending. But removal to a secondary school will be in most cases impossible, because of the fees; and even if that difficulty were met by a scholarship, the total break-up of former connections and the formation of new ones, to say nothing of the passage of an entrance examination, require an effort scarcely repaid by some nine months under an entirely new and unappreciated system. The result must be that many thousands of

system by the School Board for London. He regarded it as a counsel of despair suggested by ecclesiastical misinterpretation of the words, "The poor ye have always with you."

boys will lose their last chance of continuing their school education, and will swell the ranks of ignorance and incompetence which embarrass us in our competition with better-instructed nations. But the one gain which, in the view of our rulers, compensates us for loss of training, loss of trade, and loss of our commercial supremacy, is the retention of the Church as "the predominant partner" in national education.

"Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum."

## VIII.

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

AN incident that occurred toward the end of the Parliamentary session of 1901 gives pointed illustration to the mischiefs caused by the religious difficulty. Though said to be laid to rest by "the compromise," this difficulty has an exhaustless faculty of resurrection, and always reappears when most unexpected and most inconvenient. The School Board for London has every year a Bill in Parliament conferring on it power to secure the additional school places required by an always increasing population. In this year (1901) the Board required twenty-nine new sites, and the necessary Bill had passed through Committee. But before it was reported local opposition to a particular site in Stepney attracted the attention of influential Members of Parliament, who are also prominent in the counsels of the Religious Education Union. That these gentlemen are, according to such light as they have on the subject, friends of education is proved by their interest in that Union. But the evil wrought by a misinterpretation of the interests of religion is shown by the eagerness with which Lord Hugh Cecil and his friends seized upon a possible opportunity of wrecking this Bill at a moment when every Parliamentary day was of consequence. They succeeded in getting it referred back to Committee, and if the case against a particular school site had

been even plausible, they might have thrown out the Bill and robbed some thousands of children of education during another year. Happily the opposition on this fresh inquisition proved to have no case at all, and the Bill was sent on unmutilated for its third reading.

Now the Religious Education Union can hardly be supposed to have cared much about the grounds for local opposition to the disputed site. That opposition appears to have been based entirely on a desire to protect a site eligible for other purposes, and to force on the Board a site less generally desirable. Such considerations could have no interest for the Parliamentary representatives of the Religious Education Union. But they saw an opportunity of damaging the hated School Board system, and they seized upon it because in their view every delay would be advantageous to the reviving denominational system. I do not forget that they had a Parliamentary plea in defence of their interference at the last moment. A promise made to them by Sir John Gorst to secure consideration of their point had, it appears, slipped his memory, and accordingly they had him in their power. But they would hardly have made so much of the forgotten promise if they had not believed the sacred interests of religion to be at stake.

This case is typical of the working of the religious difficulty throughout a century of educational history. Those who have made most use of it have generally been friends of education according to their understanding of it. But they have attached such a predominant and enormous importance to theological and ecclesiastical influence that they have thought themselves to be doing God service if they could